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BAIT CASTING

THE SHORT ROD AND HOW TO USE IT

By

SHERIDAN R. JONES

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TO MICROPTERUS DOLOMIEU, THE SMALL-MOUTH,
THAT PRINCELY FRESH-WATER FISH, WHOSE
GAME BATTLES, RESOURCEFUL STRATEGY
AND UNCONQUERABLE FIGHTING SPIRIT
HAVE MADE POSSIBLE SHORT ROD
HISTORY, THIS BOOK IS AFFEC-
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INTRODUCTION

TO THE angling fraternity, especially that part of it more or less devoted to the short rod and to the art of playing from the reel, we present this little handbook on bait-casting equipment and methods. We have prepared its pages with the idea constantly in mind that any treatment of such a subject must, necessarily, be but an outline or a skeleton—the working parts and the finer detail being supplied by a growing fund of experience as the angler progresses from the ranks of the novice to the goal of the expert.

For this reason there have been purposely omitted many facts as well as fancies. That there may be other omissions of an unintentional nature we have little doubt, and we anticipate their appearance with a feeling of content, for we know that this little volume will fall into the hands of none but “anglers and very honest men.”

We have endeavored to present the fundamentals of bait-casting tackle and of bait-casting methods in as simple a manner as the more or less complete treatment of a subject will permit. Here and there we have expressed a personal preference, more by way of illustration than with the hope that our judgment will be accepted as a fixed and unchangeable bait-casting dictum.

We are confident that the novice will be able to develop sufficiently far, through a perusal of these pages, to give a good account of himself on any water and in any group of anglers. To take fish he must, in addition, patiently indulge in practice and must cultivate the bait-caster's best offering—fish sense. Of these our store is likewise far too incomplete to incorporate more than a mere suggestion here and there within the pages of this book.

SHERIDAN R. JONES.

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A bait-caster's dream

BAIT CASTING

CHAPTER I

THE BAIT-CASTING ROD

General Design and Trimmings

AS ORIGINALLY designed, bait-casting rods were intended for the casting of comparatively heavy lures, after the manner of throwing an apple from the end of a pointed stick. Most of us, who were boys in days gone by when the apple game was at its height, soon learned that a stick of a certain length was *right* for the casting of these missiles. Some of us were experts in the handling of this "deadly weapon," and the care with which we selected our sticks would do justice to the modern rodster in the selection of his rod. A casting stick can be too long and it can be too short—a bait-casting rod likewise. Bait-casting is the same old apple stick game—with *trimmings*.

We are not inclined to enter a brief as to the proper length of a casting rod. Suffice it to say that anglers who have been brought up on the fly rod always demand a casting rod that is too long for the best work with typical short rod lures and exact short rod methods. We find little reason for going over the five-foot mark in the selection of a bait-casting rod; in fact, it is the ideal length for the average short rod. To be exact, a length of four feet and ten inches makes a wonderful rod in

bamboo; a rod that is as near *right* for the casting of ordinary plugs and frogs as the angler can find. Nine-tenths of all the bait-casting rods made are in the five-foot length or less; seven-tenths of them are exactly five feet. The beginner cannot go wrong if he selects a rod very close to the five-foot length.

Bait-casting rods have the reel placed above the hand so that the thumb may be placed on the rear side-pillar for thumbing purposes when making a cast. The reel band (movable ring on handle) may or may not be provided with a finger hook; if not, it may be locked in place, after being shoved over the rod clip, by a quarter turn as a usual thing. Either the finger hook or the locking band will hold the reel firmly against the rod at all times. A free band will have a tendency to work loose under actual fishing conditions and is, therefore, to be avoided.

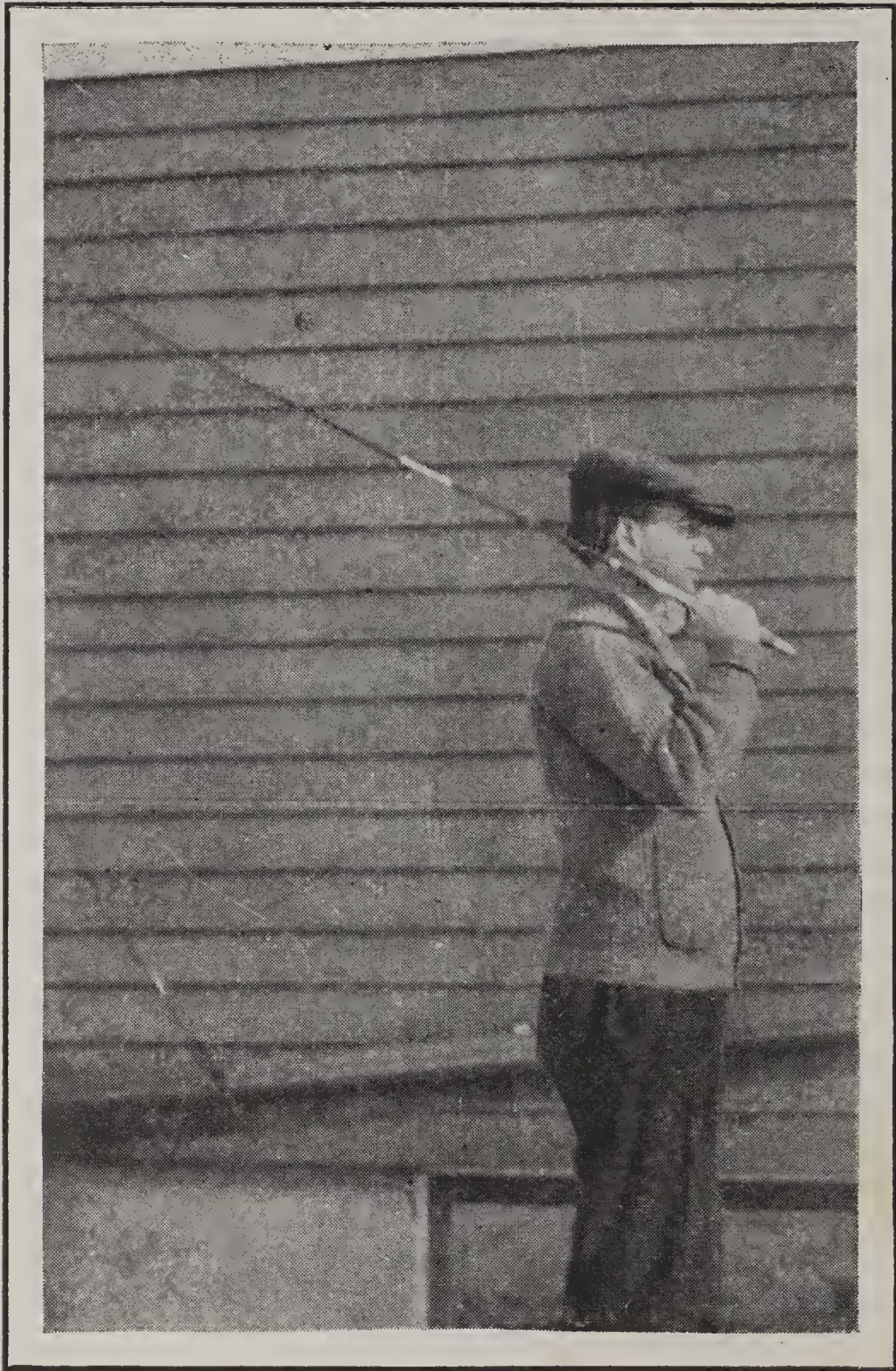
The hand grasp may be either single or double. More and more the latter is coming into popular use because the forward grip gives a nice hold on the rod during the spooling or "reeling in" movements. The extra grip gives a bit more weight but puts it in a place where weight makes little difference. Be sure that the handle is constructed of *solid cork rings* and is not a veneer; this makes the best grasp for bait-casting work, though frequently the hand grasp is made of cork composition, is wound with celluloid, or is left in plain wood. Cord wound grasps are sometimes found on the heavier rods that will be used for trolling as well as casting, but the solid cork ring is the standard type of construction. The better grade rods will be equipped with german silver, or other white metal fittings while the cheaper grade will be nickel-plated brass.

Bait-casting guides are large guides always and are usually of the single standing ring type, though the two-ring guide is frequently used on less expensive rods. One

sometimes sees bell guides on a casting rod (with the exception of the first guide and the casting top), but most anglers prefer the narrow single standing ring type. Almost without exception bait-casters of experience demand that the top be offset, though there are some very effective stirrup tops or tube tops that are not offset. Casting tops on the better rods are usually of the offset type for this reason.

In materials, agate guides represent the best that can be obtained, for they are hard, smooth and *pretty*—the last mentioned point is not without its importance, as any tackle salesman will aver. The idea is to prevent friction with the line, and the smooth surface of the agate, when properly polished, is well worth while. There are some excellent imitation agate guides and some made of file-proof metal that are just as good as real agates in everything save beauty and price. All metal guides should be tungsten steel, or some type of steel of equal hardness, never of german or nickel silver, a metal so soft that much casting will develop line cuts and thus give friction. Cheap rods often carry the soft metal guides and tops. If the angler cannot afford a higher priced wand, let him substitute imitation agate, tungsten steel or real agate first guide and top; the guides in between will not wear to any great extent.

In design, casting rods are usually of two or three piece construction and all joints of equal length; or, of two piece construction with a short butt joint and longer tip. Of course, a single piece rod is the ideal tool, since it is the material itself that gives the casting action and the introduction of ferrules breaks up this uniformity. The less ferrules the better, hence many prefer the short butt and long tip design. There are, however, some wonderful rods in the two and three equal piece patterns, and the caster may use his own judgment in making his



**Overhead cast—first position. Spool held firmly with thumb.
Make an easy forward start**

selection, knowing full well that a high quality rod of either design will do excellent work. Shorter joints and more of them are frequently employed, but, without exception, such rods lack in delivery. Rods of this type are built for greater ease in carrying—for trunk, suitcase and coat pocket use—and are usually styled Sunday rods.

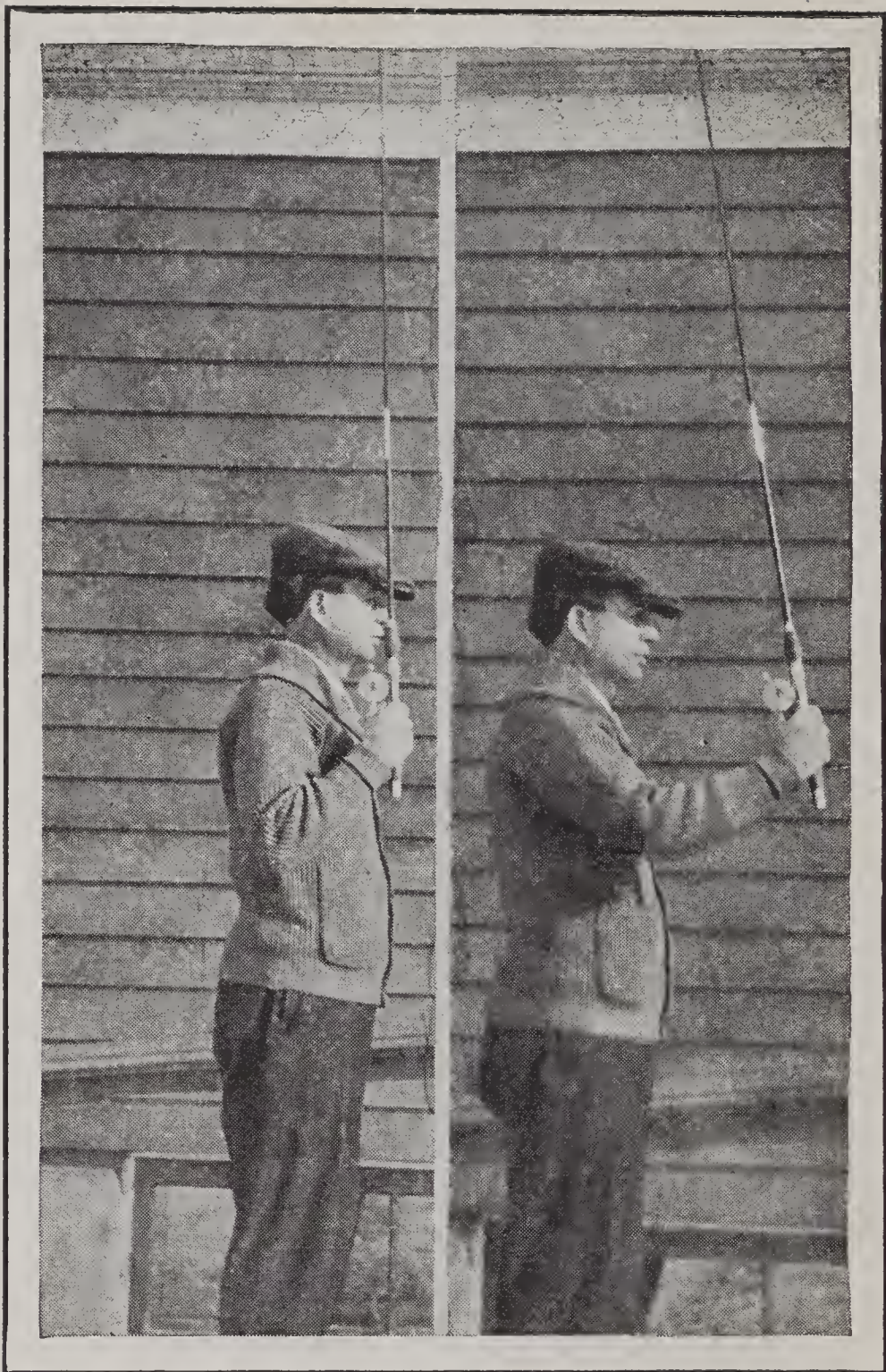
In steel rods the matter of ferrules makes little difference and a many jointed rod of this material is good. They are commonly made in three joints and an independent butt; the joints being of equal length, though there are a few with longer tip joints.

Many steel casting rods are of telescopic pattern—that is, the joints slip into each other instead of coming apart. They carry guides and tip tops as do the regular jointed rods and are in every way satisfactory, though most anglers prefer the jointed to the telescopic.

The standard bait-casting rod will possess the following characteristics: Be made of split bamboo, steel or solid wood and be in the neighborhood of five feet in length; have a single or double handle with german silver mountings if possible; possess a reel band with finger hook or a locking reel band, reel to be above the hand grasp; hand grasp of cork rings or cork composition; guides of single standing ring design, agate, file-proof metal or imitation agate, at least the first guide; tip top to be offset and of the same materials. There may be some departure from this standard as noted in the paragraphs above, but on the whole this summary about fills the bill.

Rod Materials and Their Virtues

STEEL. Excellent rods for general casting are now made of steel. The angler must not think of the steel rod in terms of a few years back when such rods were heavy poles, for there has been a wonderful improvement



Overhead cast—second and third positions. Thumb pressure removed somewhat during this stage. Lure gets its direction

in design, workmanship, and in the steel itself. These rods will stand more grief than rods of any other material, possess excellent casting force and action with ordinary lures, are great companions when going far in from any source of repair, are the best rods for trolling, since they will not take a set, and as general purpose rods are in a class by themselves. They possess more strength at any degree of flexibility than rods of other materials.

BAMBOO. When it comes right down to bait-casting action of the highest possible type, together with the ability to withstand setting, the six-strip split bamboo is IT in rod materials. Bamboo is not as strong as steel by any means, *will* take a set under undue strain but not so quickly as solid woods, yet possesses a type of flexibility and casting force that just seems about perfection. Delicacy of action and response to every whim of the angler—that about sums up split bamboo as a rod material. For the handling of the lighter lures bamboo rods are at their best, so it is the choice of the discriminating angler as a rod material for the finest kind of casting.

SOLID WOODS. With the exception of hickory, bait-casting rods of solid wood have lost in favor to a marked degree. Hickory, properly treated and properly made up, is a fine *short rod* material approaching bamboo in many respects. It can be treated so that it is far more free from setting than are the other solid wood rod materials, with the possible exception of bethabara, and possesses a casting force and action of superior quality. Bethabara, greenheart and lancewood, while possessing excellent casting qualities, will set under strain and have been largely abandoned as casting-rod materials on this side of the water. They are good woods for the amateur rod maker to tinker with because they work up into rods far more easily than does the bamboo, which must be prop-

erly split, fitted and glued. We do not recommend any solid wood to the bait-caster other than first quality bethabara and hickory; and a good hickory rod is a casting rod and no doubt about it.

The Steel Caster—A General Purpose Rod

Steel casting rods fall readily into two classes—light weight rods, weighing from about six to eight ounces, and regular weight rods at from eight to ten ounces. The heavier rods used for muskellonge and salt-water casting are really trolling rods and will not be considered in this treatment.

Most steel rods are of the three-piece and free butt type of construction—this is a standard way of building the steel caster, and there is little reason for departing from this type in regular weight steels. The lightest weight rods, six ounces, are either silk wound or supplied in joints of unequal length when put out by the better manufacturers. Five-ounce rods with equal length joints have been made and used, and, no doubt, will be put on the market again. But these light steels were so abused that manufacturers were forced to shift the weight up to six ounces or better. Silk winding naturally keeps the rod from buckling and stiffens it up, or slows it up, somewhat. Such rods are usually termed “de luxe” patterns and cost considerably more than the ordinary run of steels, but are wonderful acting rods—approaching the bamboo in fineness of action. Rods with unequal length joints permit the manufacturer to get excellent action with almost any degree of flexibility, due to shifting the lengths of the larger tubes. They are great casters in the six to seven ounce weights.

The average high quality steel caster will weigh in the neighborhood of eight ounces and may or may not be equipped with a second grasp above the reel seat and a

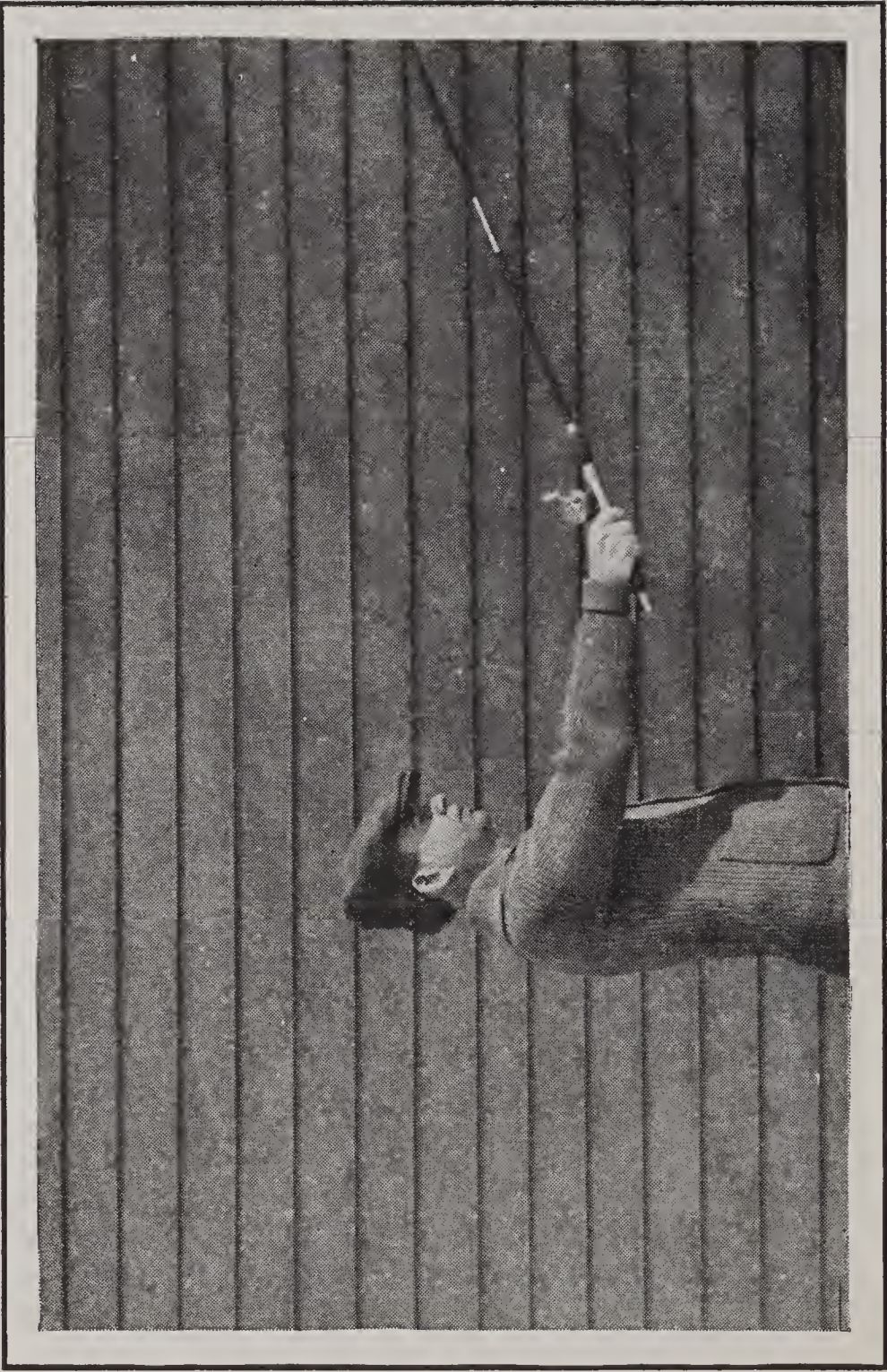
finger hook, depending upon the desire of the angler. This rod will cast the ordinary weight plugs and frogs with a twelve to fourteen-pound test line. For the lighter plugs and pork rind rigs we would recommend the steel rods weighing less than eight ounces, although an eight-ounce rod will handle light lures if the proper line is used—ten-pound test, soft-braided silk. For very light lures, such as spinners and spoons, the six to six and one-half ounce rod should be chosen and an eight-pound test line used.

Rods from nine to ten ounces need the heavier lures and are used when the angler desires to troll occasionally as well as cast. Sixteen to twenty-pound test lines may be used when the fish sought will run large—fifteen to thirty pounds. Smaller lures can be used, but the rods are quite stiff, and the lighter test lines must be spooled if good results are to obtain.

Steel rods are made all the way from four to six and one-half feet in the bait-casting type, but the four and one-half, five and five and one-half foot lengths are the ones commonly employed. It is true that the five-foot length is liked by the great majority of anglers.

It is not safe to buy a steel rod unless it is put out by a reliable maker and is guaranteed against breakage under ordinary circumstances. There are several first-class rods on the market, any one of which will give excellent service and prove a good caster under real fishing conditions. The day is passed when the steel was considered a *pole*, and no fisherman need be ashamed to carry a high quality steel and cast it in company with bamboo and solid wood.

On the whole a general purpose steel caster will fit the following lines: Be five feet in length, weigh in the neighborhood of eight ounces, have standing one-ring guides and offset or large opening tip of either agate, imitation agate or file-proof metal, single or double handgrasp



Overhead cast—finishing the cast. Reel riding on its tail-plate bearings

of solid cork rings or composition cork, and be stamped with the guarantee trademark of the maker. Should the angler desire a longer or shorter rod, we would offer no objection, and a lighter weight rod may be selected, but should follow the above lines with this exception.

Such a steel is well worth a place in any expert angler's kit.

The Split Bamboo—An Ideal Short Rod

There is no question but that the split bamboo caster is the ideal rod for the most exacting work. No material, unless it be an occasional bit of bethabara or of hickory, can equal its action in all those little fine points that are so dear to the expert rod artist. But a bamboo rod must be a good one, a mighty good one, or it will not merit rating over other rod materials. Good bamboo, the highest quality bamboo, must be well selected, long cured and painstakingly matched in order that the finished rod may have that wonderful action which has made the name split bamboo so famous.

Unless the angler is prepared to pay from fifteen to twenty-five dollars for a bamboo caster, he cannot expect to secure a rod that will be *markedly superior* in action and staying qualities to other rod materials when made into high quality rods. For this reason the steel is a favorite selection when the price element must be taken into consideration. Ten dollars will, however, buy a serviceable bamboo caster.

There is no question either but that the proper type for a bamboo rod is to be found in the one-piece construction. Such a rod gives all the action of the bamboo without the stiffening effect of a metal ferrule. The next best type is, in our estimation, the long tip and short butt, especially in the lighter rods; for this puts the ferrule well down on the heavier butt joint and does not break

up the essential tip action. In casting rods of ordinary weights this is not so necessary, and we have cast with equal joint rods that did beautiful work. The three-piece bait-casting rod is the limit that one should go in the number of joints. Ferrules are weak spots and action spoiling areas, and every added ferrule departs from the excellent action of the one-piece ideal type.

For ordinary casting the bamboo should weigh in the neighborhood of five and one-half ounces. High quality and high-priced rods can afford to approach the five-ounce weight, but the cheaper bamboo should be selected from weights close to six ounces. One maker of medium-priced rods of high casting efficiency weighs out all standard rods at five and three-quarter ounces, and this is a very good weight for a ten to fifteen dollar rod designed to cast the ordinary plugs, frogs and to do an occasional bit of trolling or other semi-rough work.

In general equipment the bamboo will be fitted out in a manner similar to that described under the general purpose steel, with the exception that a locking reel band is usually used in place of a band with finger hook. It is seldom that one sees a bamboo with a finger hook or with a solid large hole top—practically all being fitted with the offset type top. Lengths will run the same—the five-foot being a standard length for most work, while there are many experimental rods made in the four-foot ten length that just about reach casting perfection with ordinary plugs and frogs.

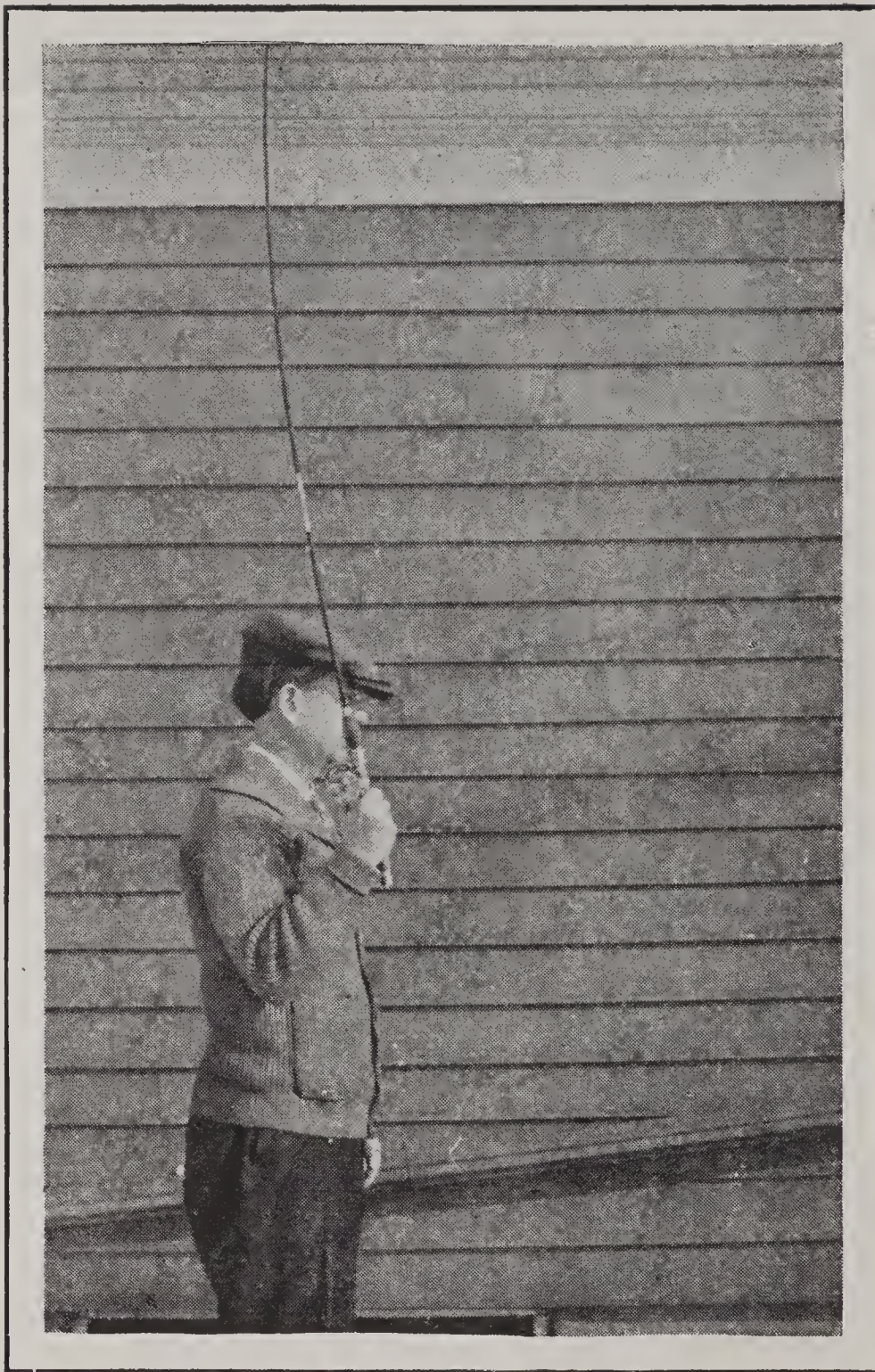
Solid Wood Rods

Solid wood bait-casting rods are not in favor in America to any marked extent because of the fact that they are inclined to take a set under ordinary strain, will warp if the varnish happens to permit the least bit of moisture to penetrate, and will even show the effects of changes

in the weather. Still there are some anglers who delight in the solid wood rod, and one frequently sees a nice bethabara or greenheart, but it is usually in a rod cabinet and not on fish producing water.

We know that in speaking of solid wood rods we should laud noibwood (educated bethabara), bethabara and greenheart and criticise lancewood—such a treatment would be the “customary” thing to do. But we are going to say that the best solid wood caster we have ever used was a de luxe hickory closely followed by a bethabara. We agree with the great majority in the belief that hickory ordinarily does make a very poor rod unless the calibre be sufficiently large to do away with the tendency to set under strain. But there is one rod made in the Middle West that is full of pep and action. The casting power of this rod, even in the four and one-half foot length, is remarkable. The tendency to set has been done away with to a marked degree and we believe that it is the strongest solid wood rod made. Being a very “whippy” wood, it can well be made in shorter lengths and with a larger calibre than most wood rods approaching it in action. Realization of this fact has produced a solid wood rod that is, in our opinion, superior to bethabara or greenheart for ordinary casting purposes, and a four and one-half foot hickory will equal the action of the other two when built in the five-foot length.

The bait-caster should not pin his faith to solid wood unless he is willing to pay real money for a rod of this material. It must be of *extra special selection*, only one stick in hundreds being “right,” must be processed to overcome strain, must be tapered to a particular size for the wood in question, and must be built in a factory where the shortcomings of the special wood are known from long experience in building rods of solid wood. Such a rod will cost from fifteen to twenty dollars, whether it



The completion of a snappy set. No need to make a full arm swing in setting the hook

be hickory, greenheart or bethabara. A low-priced solid wood bait-casting rod is worthless no matter what the material may be.

Solid wood rods *must* be kept well varnished at all times and hung from their tips with a weight tied to the butt when not in use, to avoid a partial set becoming permanent.

Light Weight Casters

There is a growing class of bait-casters who are interested in the casting of very light lures, such as spoons, spinners, light pork rinds and the very lightest of plugs—lures weighing about the one-quarter ounce weight. There is really but one rod material that at the present time is satisfactory for this work, though a second is a possibility in the near future. Solid woods, if made light and whippy enough to cast these lightest offerings, will set far too easily to be worth while. Steel can be used, and will be, but even expert casters are apt to abuse a steel rod and give it a punishment that it will not stand, just because it *is* steel. The result is that only the highest grade of split bamboo is used in the making of light-weight casters of merit.

We have experimented a great deal in this matter of perfecting the proper length, calibre and taper of a light-weight bait-casting rod and have reached the conclusion that a four-ounce rod of six strip split bamboo, specially tapered to a five-foot two length and made up in the short butt, long tip design, that such a rod is the ideal light-weight bait-casting tool. We desired to build a five-foot rod, but it must be kept in mind that while five feet is the ideal bait-casting length, there are other points to be considered in the construction of a rod to handle the lightest lures. Not only must the rod be a good caster, and such a rod can be built in the five-foot length,



Beginning and end of a right-hand right lateral cast. Reel rides on head-plate bearings

but it must also possess sufficient backbone to set the barb cleanly without undue strain, must take just the right bend under fish strain to permit of expert playing from the reel, and must be stiff enough to recover quickly when the fish tries for slack by a quick departure from the water in taking the air.

There is no question but that the five-foot two, four-ounce rod, of first quality split bamboo embodies all these requirements to the fullest extent and in a manner not to be approached by a longer or a shorter rod. Light weight tournament requirements do not enter the matter in any particular and are not to be considered. The tournament caster has his own *casting* ideals to satisfy, not *playing from the reel* ideals as well.

Tournament Rods

We shall have practically nothing to say in this treatment of bait-casting equipment anent tournament rods, for it is a well-known fact that tournament casters differ greatly in their ideas concerning the proper length, weight and calibre of the ideal rod for this work. Also tournament casting is not bait-casting for fish, hence the rod is called upon to *deliver* the weight only. There is neither setting of the hook nor playing from the reel—there is no fish at the end of the line. Whatever weights, calibres and lengths seem to suit the individual caster, these are right in so far as they fall within the limits of the generous rules for this sport.

Tournament events are usually of the following classes: Distance $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce, distance $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, distance fisherman's plug; accuracy $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce, accuracy $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce and accuracy fisherman's plug. Among the more common lengths and weights seen in action in the regular tourna-

ments, though by no means are all dimensions given, will be found the following:

$\frac{1}{4}$ Ounce Events:

- 5 feet, six inches, $5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 5 feet, eight inches, $5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 6 feet, 4 ounces
- 6 feet, $5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 6 feet, $5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
- 6 feet, three inches, $4\frac{3}{4}$ ounces
- 6 feet, three inches, $5\frac{3}{4}$ ounces

$\frac{1}{2}$ Ounce Events

- 5 feet, six inches, $4\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 5 feet, eight inches, $5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 6 feet, $4\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 6 feet, $5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
- 6 feet, $5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces

Fisherman's Plug:

Rather stiff rod in above lengths and weights, usually similar to the $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce events.

There is a tendency to use a shorter and stiffer rod in the distance events and a longer, more whippy rod in the accuracy events, but there is no uniformity about the matter at all. It all depends upon the whims of the casters themselves and their ability with certain lengths, weights and calibres.

Tournament casting is excellent sport, develops skill with the short rod, and soon determines what rods possess quality. The ordinary angler should mix a little tournament work in with his regular fishing for he will benefit greatly by being associated with excellent casters, and most of the "top notch" boys are glad to give advice to the beginner.

CHAPTER II

THE BAIT-CASTING REEL

Why a Quadruple Multiplier

THE BAIT-CASTING reel is a quadruple multiplying reel always. Reels may be single action, double multipliers, treble multipliers, quadruple multipliers and on up to the nine multiplier which was on the market years ago—that is, they *can* be made in any multiplying pattern desired. Few, however, depart very much from the single action for fly fishing, the double action for heavy work, and the quadruple for bait-casting.

A quadruple multiplier is a reel, the spool of which revolves four times to every revolution of the handle. In other words, when the handle is turned the spool goes around four times as fast as the handle spins. Examination of a large number of reels will show that “quads” are not all perfect. Some will do little better than three, some exactly four, and some spin close to five—but in practice they are called “quads,” and most first quality reels will approach the “four times to the handle’s once” closely.

A reel of this type is chosen for bait-casting because the leverage gained is just right in comparison to the speed of getting in the line. Playing from the reel, against the ordinary fish that one captures with a bait-casting outfit, reaches its highest possibilities with the “four to one” reel; the handling of a lure in the water in a fish-taking manner demands the same type; and the outgoing lure, before the days of the free spool, could pull the line from the spool best when the handle was

not geared below the quarter revolution. Hence a quadruple multiplier *always* for bait-casting.

Reel Materials

The better bait-casting reels are, almost without exception, made of german silver or other similar alloy. It is only the lower priced products that are made of nickel-plated brass, and while some very good nickel-plated reels are on the market, anglers generally demand the white metal alloy because it can be burnished back to its original luster on tarnishing. Some bait-casting reels have hard rubber end plates. Such material is of value in that it makes a lighter reel and avoids the glitter of bright metal. The former point is of value in heavy salt-water reels, the latter in fly-casting winches—the rubber end plate bait-casting reels being of no special value to the bait-caster save as a matter of choice. Weight is not an item and the cast is so long that the glitter can be dimmed sufficiently by a “satin” or dull finish.

The Standard Caster

The standard bait-casting reel is a quadruple multiplying reel with a long spoon—popularly termed a Kentucky Pattern. It is customarily supplied with a drag (friction on the spool) as well as a click (pawl and ratchet friction), although many of the higher priced reels may have only the click or be without either. Neither the click nor the drag is to be used in bait casting—they serve only as a means of keeping the spool from spinning freely when the angler is “doing something else” or when the reel is used for trolling purposes.

The casting reel is usually made in sixty, eighty and one hundred yard sizes, and the capacity of the reel is measured by a number five line. Since lines are variously

listed as to sizes, it may be said that a number five will test in the neighborhood of twelve pounds breaking strength. Some bait-casting reels are larger, even up to one hundred and fifty yards, while some are as small as forty yards capacity. Eighty makes a nice size for general use, yet many prefer the full one hundred yard size for ordinary casting purposes.

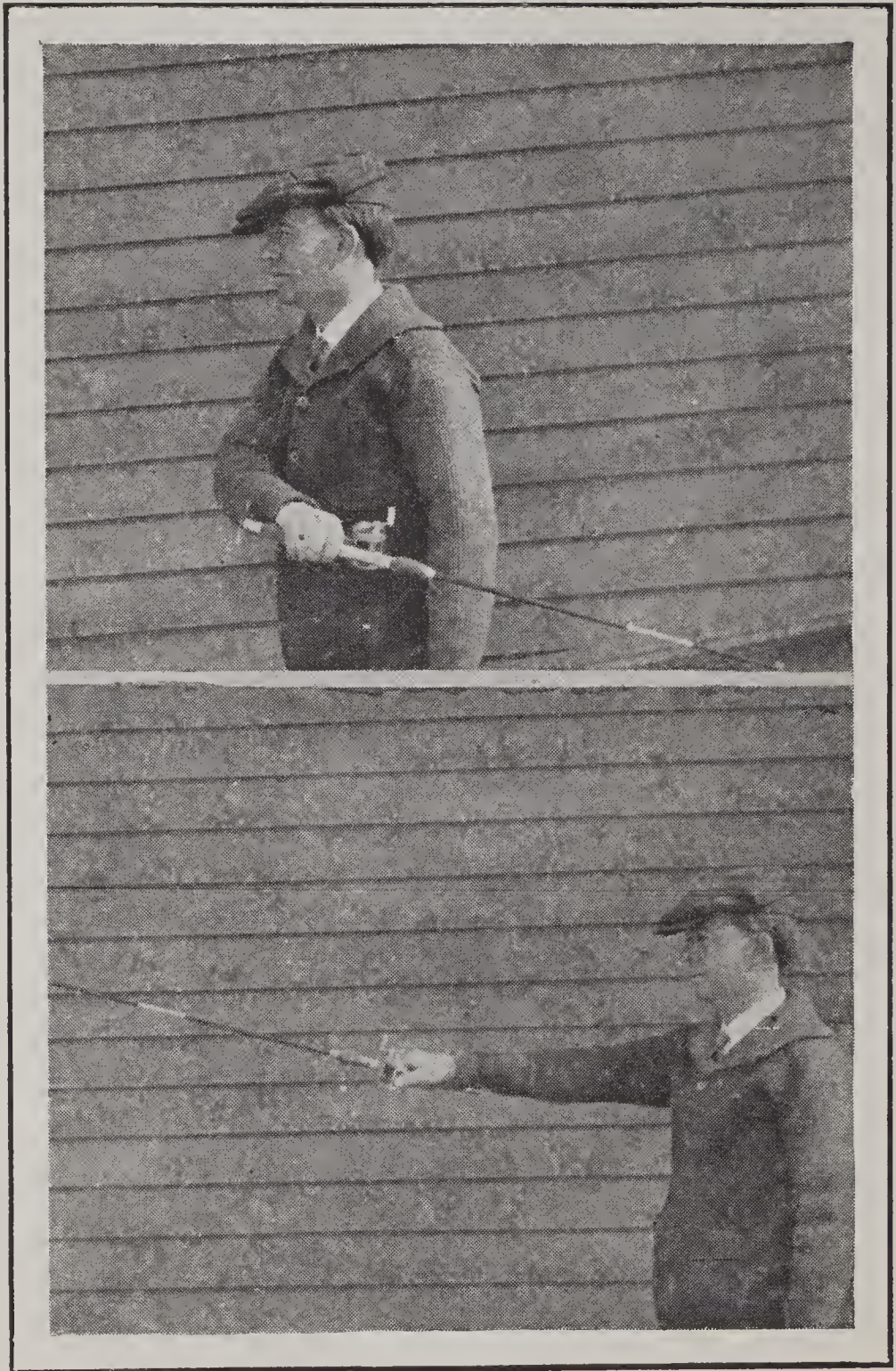
Since the spool must spin freely and without friction, high quality reels are usually fitted with jewelled bearings, especially jewelled caps to take the end thrust, while some have additional jewelled bushings. Bronze bushings are used in the more moderately priced high quality reels, and there is no question but that they are fully as good as jewelled bushings so far as all practical purposes are concerned.

Some of the more moderately priced reels have a very simple take-apart mechanism which permits of easy cleaning and oiling without the removal of any screws or the changing of the adjustments. This is a very handy feature. The older reels of standard make and watchlike precision are built in a solid manner, but are so closely fitted that it is seldom necessary to take them down under ordinary casting conditions and barring accidents. If kept well oiled, just a drop at a time, they will give no trouble.

Bait-casting reels have a single balanced handle, or a double handle, or are free spool. In the latter case the handle does not spin as the line runs out but the spool is again picked up when reeling begins. Most modern free spool reels are positive in their action.

Level-Winders and Self-Thumbers

To avoid the necessity of spooling the line by hand, reel manufacturers have developed several attachments that take care of this work in a first-class manner. Reels

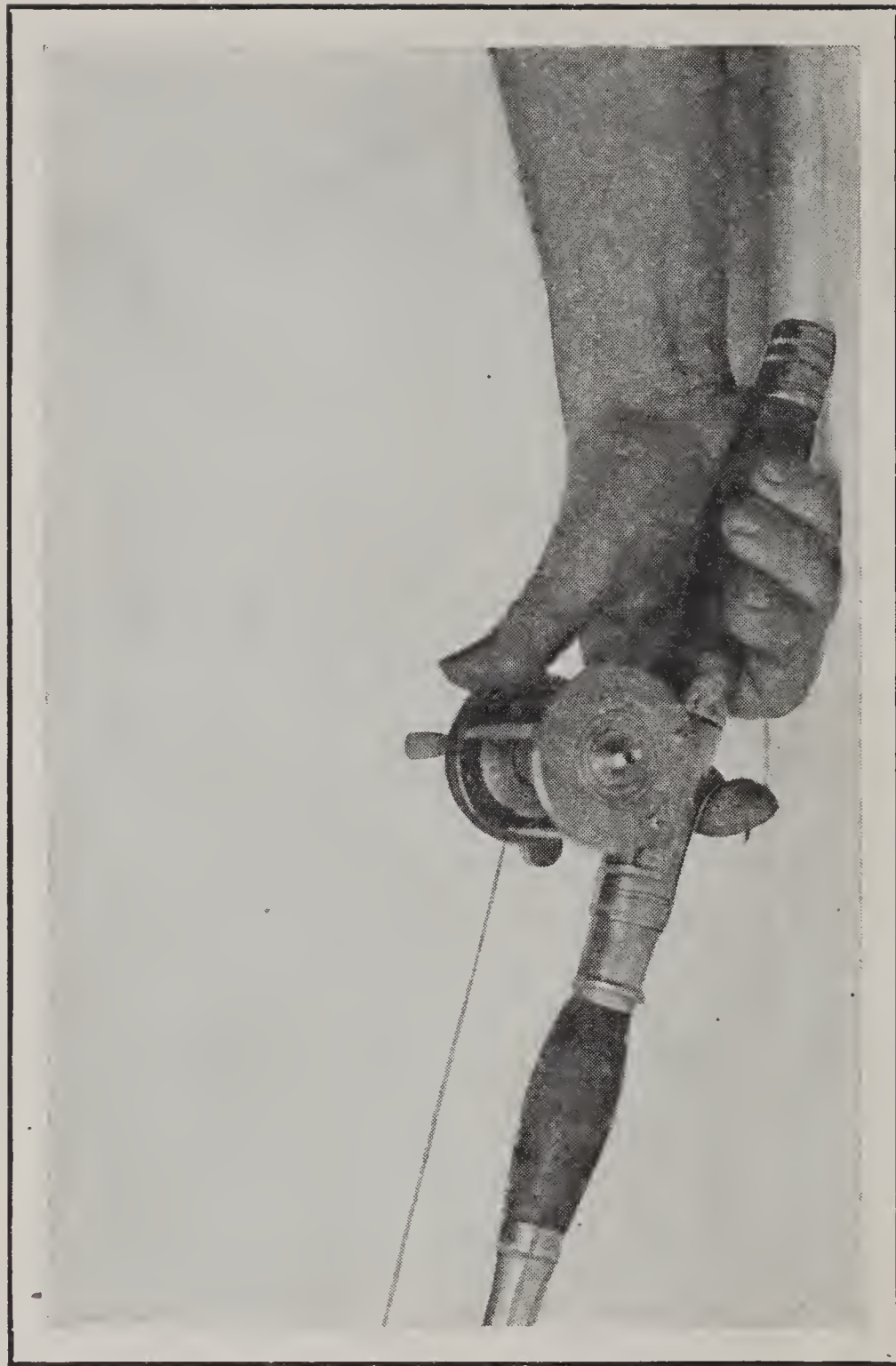


Beginning and end of a right-hand left lateral cast. Reel rides on tail-plate bearings

so equipped are called level-winders. There is no question but that a level-winding attachment is a great help under a variety of conditions. It permits the angler to give his full attention to the fighting fish or the incoming lure; a back-lash is partially avoided, due to the fact that the line is properly spooled and does not pile up at any point; and for the angler who is not schooled in the proper manipulation of the incoming line, these reels are a source of joy, since they aid materially in a day's casting.

Some reels are fitted with built-in attachments to thumb the spool and to stop its forward motion just as soon as the line ceases its forward pull. Such reels are styled self-thumbers or anti-back-lash reels. Naturally these reels also find favor in the hands of both expert casters and amateurs. While most good casters prefer to use the standard open casting reel under normal conditions, there *are* times when a self-thumbng feature is very much worth while and aids materially in the prevention of the dreaded back-lash. For night casting especially they find a place in every knowing angler's kit, and for shooting a lure all day into the teeth of a heavy wind they are also fine. Naturally, the man who has not learned to cast with ease, the week-end vacationer, such a man can get a full day's sport and do just as good casting as can the expert who knows how to apply the thumb properly.

Then come the "do it all" reels—the self-thumbng-self-spooling reels that do everything but make the cast. These are the so-called "highly educated" reels that are wonderful night casting winches and that make bait-casting possible to the man who has not time to learn the thumbng and spooling part of this strenuous game. They are well worth while, for the whole family can lay a good line without trouble. Naturally, a good bait-caster



Grip the rod with palm and fingers. Thumb should be relaxed

will use his standard caster most, for he likes to feel that he has mastered the difficult parts of the casting game. Nevertheless he will have a good word for these excellent reels and will use them when the occasion arises, for he knows their place and the excellent manner in which they fill it.

The Tournament Reel

Little need be said of the bait-casting reel in a tournament model, for tournament reels are simply first quality bait-casting reels with a few extras, such as the caster may wish. Commonly reels for this work are fitted with a cork arbor which builds up the spool to a larger diameter; the spool may be built of aluminum and the handle as well; jewelled bearings are customary and both click and drag may be absent, although the click is often retained merely to keep the spool from running free when not in use.

The light test tournament lines, five and eight pounds as a usual thing, do not take up much room on the reel, hence the use of a large diameter spool, and the lightness of a cork and aluminum spool and handle both make for excellent performance.

Tournament reels are not necessarily high priced winches, for some of them fall well within the reach of the average angler's pocketbook. Naturally, however, men who follow the tournament game desire the best that can be obtained, and some of the patterns seen on the casting platforms are certainly things "of beauty and joys forever."

The Indiana Pattern Reel

The Indiana Pattern reel differs from the Kentucky Pattern in that it is a single action reel of large diameter. It is a radical departure from the ordinary bait-

casting reel in that it is simply a large spiderlike revolving disk that picks up about eighteen inches of line at each revolution of the handle. These reels are mainly equipped to be anti-back-lash and their very nature makes them self-spooling. One of their best features is the fact that they dry the line quickly, due to their wide open build and broad diameter. Most of them may be thumbed if the angler so desires.

Many fishermen hold these large diameter reels in high favor since they make it possible for an amateur to make excellent casts with a minimum of practice, and they can be used in the casting of the lightest lures. Anglers who have been brought up on the Kentucky Pattern reel will, naturally, favor the long spool quad, and it is doubtful if the large reels will ever take the place of this pattern for many reasons, chief among which is the fact that they are difficult to pack and carry.

That they do good work goes without saying, and their low price is attractive.

CHAPTER III

THE BAIT-CASTING LINE

Material

THERE IS only one material that can be used successfully in the manufacture of bait-casting lines, and that is silk. Cotton and linen both swell when wet and pick up a great amount of water. For this reason only the best quality of silk is used in the building of lines for the short rod. When we say *best quality* we mean just that and no less, for there are a great many different grades of silk, only a very few of which are suited to the work in hand. We would emphasize this point so that the angler may know how necessary it is to purchase lines from a reliable line manufacturer. It is possible to buy very cheap silk lines—lines not worth the consideration of the caster at any price.

Most bait-casting lines are untreated in any manner. Some, however, are treated with a waterproof dressing. The dressing for a casting line must be of such a nature that it does not stiffen it in any particular, otherwise it will be unfit for use. Oiled and enameled lines can not be used for bait-casting, although they both make excellent trolling lines and may be spooled on the quad for this purpose.

Untreated silk lines must always be dried thoroughly after use, dried in the shade, otherwise they will become weak quickly. Silk is animal material and must be kept dry if it is to give the desired service.

Braids

Bait-casting lines are always braided, never twisted. There are three standard braids: Soft, medium and hard.

Other things being equal, the softer the braid the better will it cast; consequently the line for the finest type of casting is a soft-braided silk. Lines may be braided either round or square, and while a great many prefer the square braid because it does not tend to flatten, either will give good satisfaction during the average length of a bait-casting line's life. Soft braids are less durable than medium and hard-braided lines but they are better casters. The harder the braid the more durable, all else being equal.

The stronger bait-casting lines are often braided upon a core; this tends to keep them round as well as to increase their strength. It also increases the stiffness of the line to some extent, hence it is desirable that the core be absent from the lightest soft braids.

Medium-braided lines may be used for the medium to heavy lures, as may also the smaller hard braids—though a very hard-braided line makes a better trolling line than a caster. The harder the braid the less easily will it run from the reel, hence the selection of a soft-braided silk of low test breaking strength as the ideal bait-casting line for light lures.

Colors

There are many different color patterns used in the manufacture of lines—because the angler has a fancy for certain colors and the manufacturers catch anglers not fish. As a matter of fact, most color combinations are dark and practically the same color when in the water.

The standard color for a casting line is white ticked with black. This combination is gray when wet and is about as good as can be selected for practically all work. Some waters demand a white line, and occasionally a black line may be indicated; but as a rule, the color of the line makes little difference, and the angler may se-

lect any pattern that appeals to his own fancy with the assurance that it will be highly satisfactory.

Sizes

Bait-casting lines should be of small diameter and low test breaking strength. Such lines cast to the best advantage. The great majority of bait-casters select a line that is far too strong and their casting suffers as a result. The more expert the caster becomes the lighter will be the line used. For light, medium and heavy lures such an angler will select an eight, ten and twelve-pound test line. A plain, every-day good caster will choose the ten, twelve and fourteen. The ordinary angler should not go over the twelve, fourteen and sixteen-pound tests unless after big pike and muskellonge, when an eighteen to twenty-pound test will be strong enough.

It is most ridiculous to see a man trying to cast light lures for bass with a line testing from twenty to thirty pounds—a line strong enough to hold a tarpon or a tuna of reasonable size. A light line for successful bait-casting always.

Casting Leaders

When bait-casting for bass, with no danger of picking up a pike or muskellonge, no leader is necessary, the line being looped directly to the lure. But when there is a possibility of connecting with fish possessing sharp teeth, it is the part of wisdom to make use of a wire or gimp leader. There are leaders on the market that are flexible and equipped with a snap for lure attachment that will save the day under such circumstances. It is not necessary that these leaders be overly long. Four, six or eight inches will put the line out of danger unless the fish are running very large. We would not advise

over ten inches—twelve at the outside—for the fish in the average fishing territory.

For the casting of very light lures it is often well to use a leader of gut, and for this purpose short lengths of gut substitute will be found excellent. This material will stand a great deal of chewing on the part of a pike and will give the angler an opportunity to save his lure as well as the fish frequently. As a rule, however, no leader is necessary in bait-casting for bass, even though an occasional wall-eye or pike will be hooked. Should this occur, break off the looped end of the line and start casting with a fresh knot.

CHAPTER IV

THE ART OF BAIT CASTING

Rigging the Rod

IN RIGGING up the bait-casting rod preparatory to making a cast there are two points that should always be kept in mind: The first, that all guides must be in line with the flat side of the reel seat; the second, that sooner or later the rod must again be taken down. To make the latter work easy and to avoid sticking ferrules, it is wise to rub the male ferrule through the hair a few times to give it a thin coating of oil. If the angler will do this every time the rod is put together there will be little opportunity, or necessity, to twist and pull on a balky joint. The slight film applied by contact with the hair and scalp is sufficient to make the joints slip with ease. Telescopic rods must, of course, be kept well coated with a high-grade thin oil to keep them from binding and rusting internally.

The reel should be firmly fastened to its seat by pressing the reel band well over the rod clip and by turning it a quarter turn to one side, if the band is of the locking variety. Some rods have the reel band above the reel, others below. If above, it should be of the locking variety or else carry a finger hook; if below, a locking variety is desirable, but not an absolute requirement, since the thumb pressure during the cast keeps the rod clip well fitted in its stationary band and the free band does not work loose with any degree of frequency.

After the reel has been placed in position, with the handle on the right when the reel is uppermost, the line is drawn out toward the guides *over* the side-pillar—

that is, between the top-pillar and the front side-pillar. Never pull the line out *under* this side-pillar, for the line, in leaving the reel, is thrown upward by the revolving spool and must have considerable up and down play to run freely. The line may now be threaded through the guides and out through the tip top, using care that it runs in a straight line and is not wound around the rod at any point. Make a five-inch casting loop in the end of the line, loop this to a short snap swivel, attaching this to the eye ring of the lure to be used, and the rod is ready for action.

Thumbing the Reel

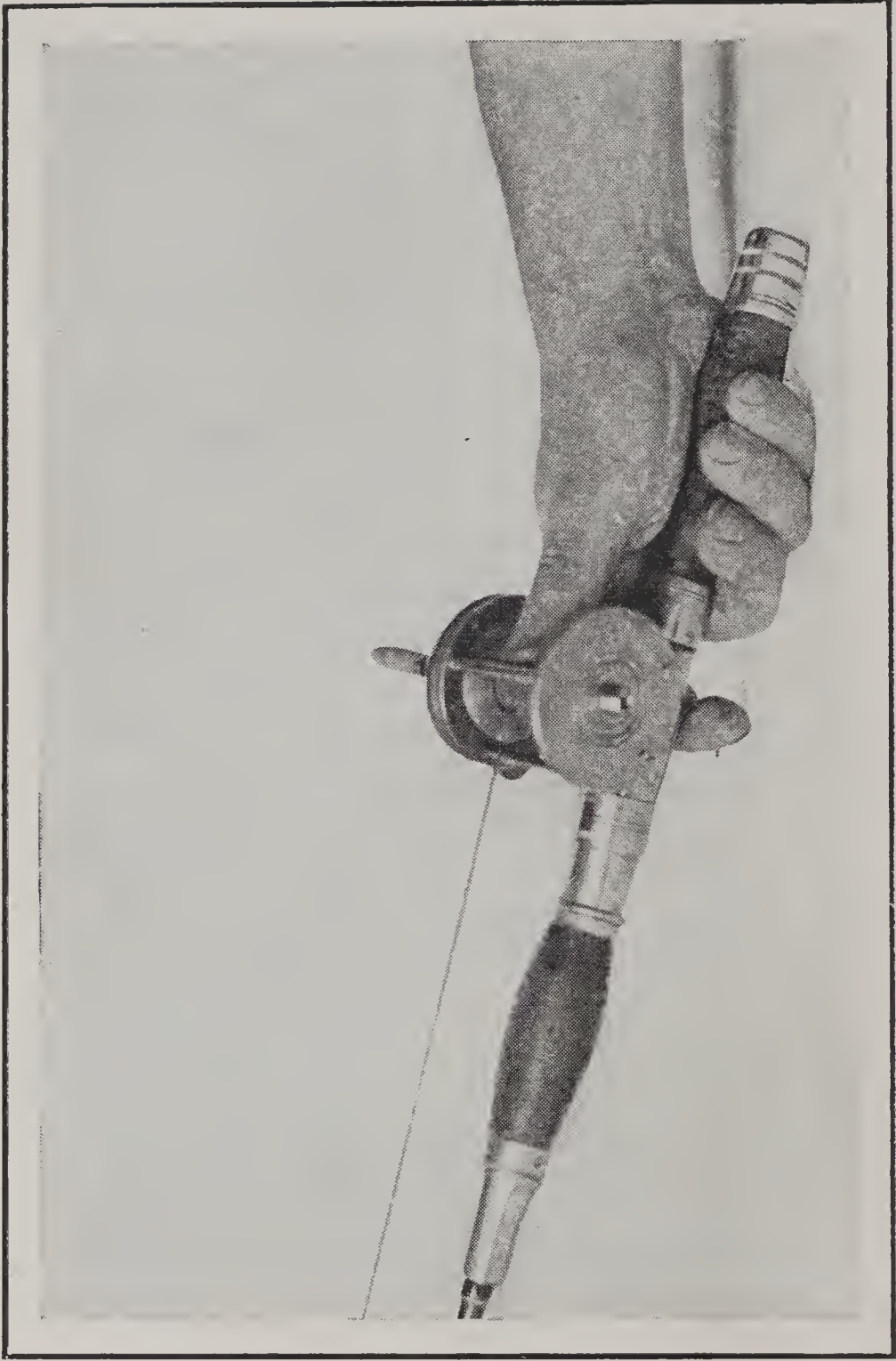
Proper thumbing of the reel is one of the most important parts of the bait-casting process. Not that thumbing is at all difficult, far from it, but it is an act that must be practised over and over again until it becomes automatic or reflex. Writers frequently speak of an "educated thumb" in bait-casting, and they mean by this statement that the thumb governs the motion of the spool through the sense of touch and that it instantly applies the proper pressure without the angler giving the slightest attention to the outgoing line. This can only be accomplished through practice and more practice; but when once learned, the difficulty vanishes and thumbing the reel is just about as automatic a process as is the work of the best self-thumbings or anti-back-lash mechanism.

There are two methods of thumbing—thumbing the line and thumbing the end drum or head of the spool. In thumbing the line the rod is grasped firmly, with the thumb resting on the center of the rear side-pillar and shoved over this pillar far enough to permit exerting some pressure upon the line as it lies upon the spool. The grip should be mainly a palm and finger tightening, for the thumb should be more or less relaxed so that it

may be rocked back and forth over the pillar as the vanishing line may demand. While this style of thumbing is the more commonly used, it nevertheless works a hardship on the angler's thumb, if much casting is done, and we would recommend that the end drum style be mastered.

In thumbing the end drum or spool head the reel is turned a bit more toward the left when the grip is taken and the thumb is applied to the end drum in the angle formed by the pillar and tail plate. Less pressure is needed to govern the line when this style of thumbing is employed; the end drum offers a stationary object to which the pressure may be applied; and the smooth metal can spin against the thumb throughout the day without causing irritation. The angler, in first trying this style of thumbing, will check his lure too much and short casts will result, but after the knack of the new style is mastered, we feel confident that better results will obtain than when line thumbing is employed. This should be practised until the thumb muscles are not tensed by the grip required to hold the rod—the proper grip is a flexible one always.

In starting the cast, the thumb is applied firmly to the line or end drum to keep the spool from revolving, and this pressure is maintained until the rod has been brought sharply forward and the lure thus given direction. The position from which this motion is started will vary with the type of cast used and will be mentioned in detail later, although the rod is usually dropped back over the right shoulder to an almost horizontal position when starting the cast. From this position it is brought sharply forward and stopped at approximately a forty-five degree angle, the arm being thrust forward as the motion is completed until fully extended, and the rod is made to point in the direction of the intended cast, with the tip



Grip for thumbing the line

somewhat above the horizontal. During this movement the thumb presses firmly on the spool until the lure is shooting straight toward the front—just after the rod has passed the angler's head and is traveling straight out as the arm is being extended—but is then raised from the spooled line sufficiently to permit the lure to pull the line easily *but not free from all pressure*. If the angler is thumbing the end drum the thumb will need but little elevation to accomplish this purpose.

Should the spool be released too soon the lure will fly high in the air, due to the fact that it was traveling in an upward direction when set free. If held too long it will strike the water directly in front of the angler, since it was carried over in the arc of a circle. Released at the proper time it will shoot straight forward, with a bit of upward elevation, and drop to the water easily when the weight of the lure ceases to pull more line from the spool. To master this takes much practice, but once acquired, the time element soon becomes second nature.

Too much pressure on the line or end drum, after the lure has been started on its flight, will cause a short cast. Yet it is far better to use too much pressure at first, letting up a bit as the cast is mastered, since too little pressure permits the spool to revolve faster than the lure pulls the line away—and this is the dread of all bait-casters, a *back-lash* or *bird's-nest*. We shall give a few pointers later on how to handle this angler's curse when it occurs. Always keep *some pressure* on the line or end drum however slight the need may be.

Making the Cast

THE OVERHEAD CAST. This is the approved short rod cast, although under actual fishing conditions it is probably true that the side cast (side-swipe) will run it

a close race so far as custom among fishermen is concerned. The overhead route is, however, considered standard for several reasons: First, it is the only safe cast when there are companions in the boat or close along the shoreline; second, it is the only method of gaining accuracy of lure placement—the other casts are too erratic; third it is the most difficult, of the three given, to learn and should be mastered first, since it embodies the main principles of all casting with the short rod. When the angler has developed the side cast first he will find himself “side-swiping” about nine-tenths of the time, in places where the overhead route is not only indicated but preferable.

The overhead cast is not difficult to grasp. The apparent difficulty lies only in the fact that much practice is necessary before the angler will be able to drop the lure in the desired spot—and a great deal of this schooling will be in the education of the thumb. Soon the caster will begin to get the “feel” of the flying lure and will be able to stop it easily and lightly whenever fancy may dictate.

In making this cast the rod is dropped back over the right shoulder largely by relaxing the muscles of the wrist, the elbow remaining in the neighborhood of the waistline. The tip will fall somewhat below the horizontal from the shoulder, but the point from which the cast is started will vary with the temperament of the angler. A sharp, snappy cast may well be started from near the horizontal, but a slow, swinging cast will need to begin well below the horizontal position.

Thumbing the reel firmly, the rod is brought straight over the shoulder, and when it has reached the vertical, the arm is shot straight out toward the front as in striking a blow—the rod being brought on over to a forty-five degree angle from the head while the arm is travel-

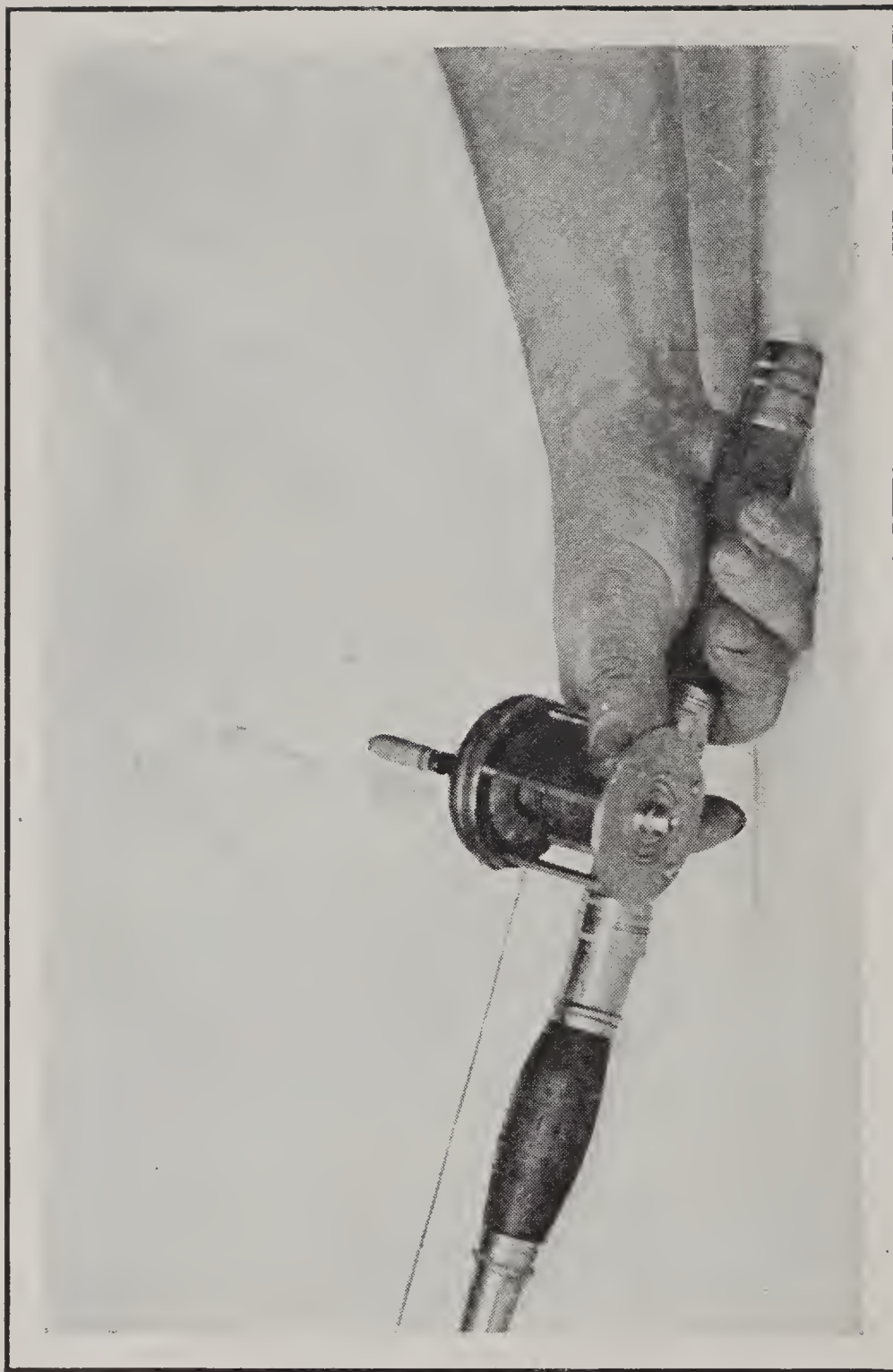
ing to its extended position. Some casters carry on down to a nearly horizontal position, finishing by pointing the rod tip at the desired spot or a few feet above this spot. Being but a matter of a few inches we will consider this merely "form."

It is during the time that the rod is traveling *straight toward the front* that the thumb pressure is removed and the lure given its direction of flight. Naturally there is some knack about this lessening of thumb pressure, but it is nine-tenths of the casting problem. With a constant *light* control of the line the angler watches the flying lure until it approaches the desired spot and then shuts down *just a wee bit* with the thumb. Checked in the air the lure *hesitates* and *settles down*. Should the lure reach the water unchecked, there is a splash; should the checking be too sudden, the lure will jump back at the angler or be snapped off if the cast has been a strong one.

If the angler has been employing the line thumbing method, the reel will finish the cast on the upper side of the rod and only slightly tipped toward the left; but if the end drum has been thumbed, the reel should stand practically on end and be on the left side of the rod when it has reached its position of rest after the cast. This puts the spool in the better position for spinning.

Keep this fact in mind always—it is *the wrist and the forearm* that do the major part of the work in casting. Rarely is it necessary to use a full arm swing when casting by the overhead route.

THE LATERAL CAST. This cast differs from the overhead type in but a few particulars. As its name implies, it is a side swing and is frequently indicated under actual fishing conditions. It is of especial value when casting beneath overhanging trees, and, in fact, at any time when accuracy of placement is not essential. For open



Grip for thumbing end of spool

water work and where one is just casting the water, not pockets, it is often used successfully. When desiring to drop a heavy lure lightly, it again has a place; and there are others that we might mention if necessary. Long experience with this cast will give one quite a measure of accuracy, yet it is not to be compared in this particular with the overhead route.

While the side cast is mainly a wrist and forearm movement, the whole arm is brought more into play than is the case in the overhead cast. Reaching slightly behind on either the right or the left side of the body, the tip is brought well back of the caster by bending the wrist as far as is possible, yet keeping the rod in a horizontal position (or even above the horizontal). The cast is then started with a snappy wrist and forearm movement, followed by a partial arm swing. The rod will end the cast by pointing directly toward the front with the tip elevated slightly. If the cast has been started from the right side, many anglers will finish the cast with the reel turned to the right of the rod—riding on the handle. If from the left (the cast being made with the right hand), the reel will ride on its tail plate—the handle being up. In the former case some thumb the end drum, some the line itself. The character of the thumbing will be determined largely by the “form” in which the angler decides to finish his cast—reel handle up, down or reel axis horizontal.

THE UNDERHAND CAST. This is but a slight modification of the lateral cast, wherein the tip is permitted to pass below the horizontal, even to a point near the ground. The cast is then made in a manner similar to that of the side cast, but the swing of the arm is more complete and the tip passes from a low point to a high position when it stops in front of the angler. This, naturally, shoots the bait high. It is a good cast to know,

since it is often possible to flip a lure out under limbs and branches that even the lateral cast could not negotiate. This cast is easily made from either side with but a minimum of practice, and many anglers who have started with it, because it seemed "natural," have never passed the underhand and "sideswipe" stage in casting. Master the overhead first and pick up the others later.

After all, do not let this discussion or that of any other writer influence you in the belief that there is a sacred "form" to which an angler must attain before he can be classed as a real bait-caster. In the light of some of the articles we have read we feel sure that we personally do not know one end of a short rod from the other—this in spite of the fact that we grew up with a bait-casting rod. Form is a fine thing, and artistic casting demands it—but form is more to be desired on the tournament platform than on waters inhabited by real fish. Naturally a tournament caster can see little virtue in any cast other than the specially timed overhead. Such a cast wins the points. But the practical bait-caster will need all the space from the ground on the one side to the water level on the other, if he is to master all the situations in a day's mixed casting.

Nor will the angler be content with the casts described if he progresses far as a short rod artist. There are many little flips of the lure, scarcely to be dignified as casts, that will win under difficult situations. When once the general idea of the casting game has been mastered and some expertness has developed, both rod and reel become a part of the man, and casts are made with as little attention to method and form as would obtain were the angler to cast the lure with his unaided hand.

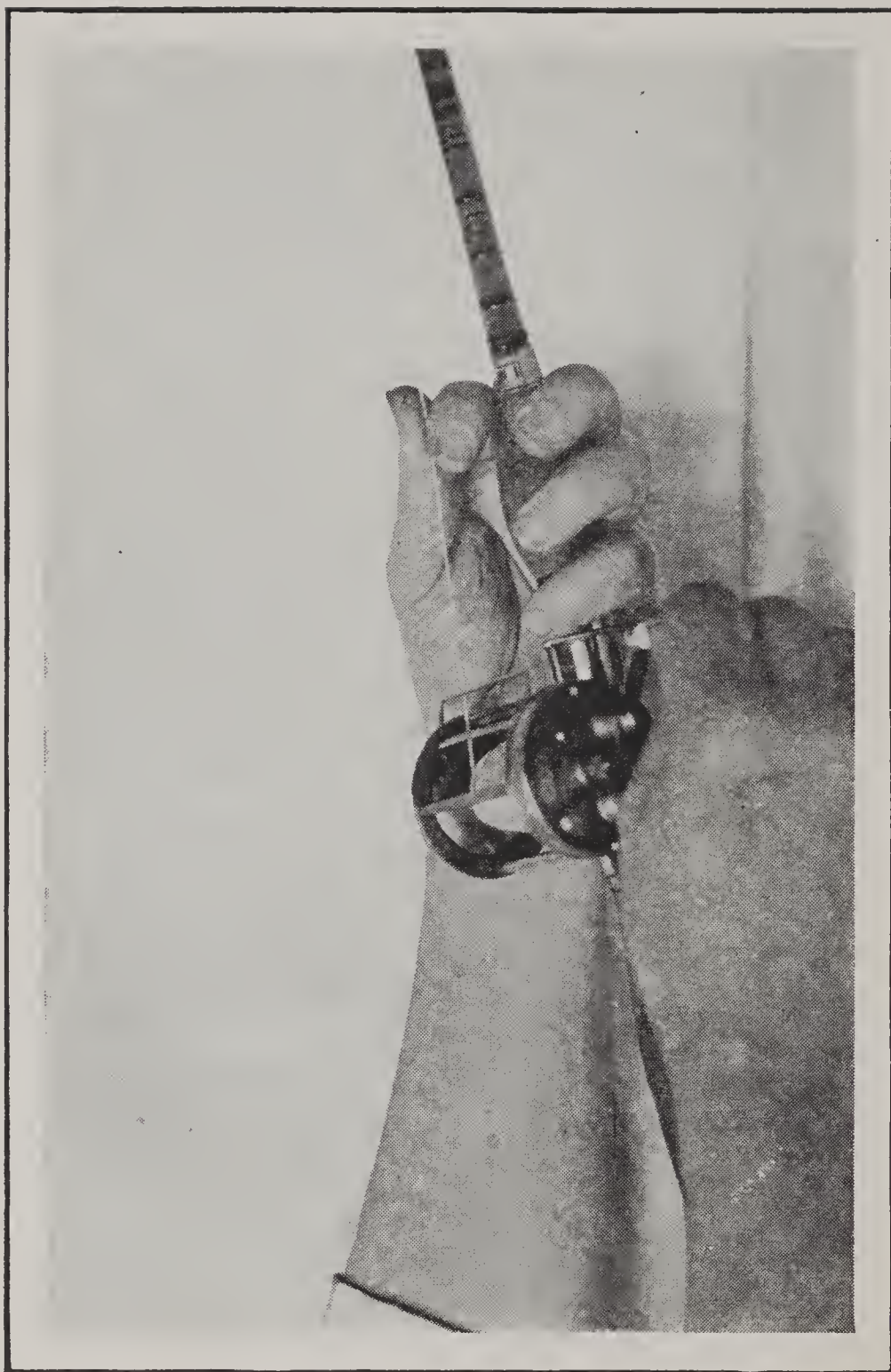
Retrieving the Lure

No matter how important the proper placement of the lure may be as to position, the handling of the bait-

caster's offering *as* and *after* it strikes the water is the real fish-getting part of short rod angling. There are several methods of making a lure go through its stints, all more or less dependent upon fish moods and the type of offering used. We will mention several that should be carefully worked out in the angler's own way—later he will develop little tricks and fish-netting kinks that will win for him, though possibly for no one else.

The most common method of handling a lure is to stop it with a slight pressure of the thumb just over the desired water, permitting it to fall lightly upon the surface. If it be a surface lure, it should be started back toward the angler by swinging the tip to the left just as soon as the offering strikes the water; a change of rod from right to left hand being made and the swing completed with the left hand as the right seeks the reel handle and starts the retrieve. This is a *continuous process*. The lure should not lose its incoming motion from the instant it strikes the water to the time it is well on its way toward the angler. Wobblers will be handled in the same manner, but a sinking underwater may rest while the angler makes the change of hands, since it will be in motion downward during this period and will thus be an active lure even though the retrieve is started a bit late.

There is a much better method, however—more difficult but far more taking, and it will pay any angler well to spend hours in mastering the exact timing that will make such a retrieve possible. As the lure is stopped, hovering over the proper spot, the tip is started toward the left (or right, as seems the more handy to the individual) *while the bait is still in the air*. Proper timing of this tip movement will make the lure *dive into the water* instead of drop into it, and there is a continuous incoming movement from the moment the bait stops in the air until well in toward the angler. This start is a winner.



Spooling line from front hand-grasp. A self-thumbing reel in action

A third method may be employed where the proper bank or floating bog or other cover is present. Drop the lure *on* the cover and *hop it off* after the rod has changed hands; then keep it coming. This, like the dive, is a very taking start.

When all else fails, permit the lure to drop and rest upon the surface; make it jump and wiggle a bit by occasionally lifting the tip sharply, and then start the retrieve. We have seen such a start often win a strike when the active lure was drawing a total blank.

We have spoken of the start of the retrieve at length because most strikes will occur at this point. A lure that has been coming in for some little distance is not a taking offering as a rule (though there are exceptions to all rules). However, many fishermen make the common mistake of keeping the bait coming in at a uniform rate of speed—slow reeling, medium and fast, as fancy may dictate. This is not as it should be. An incoming bait should have an erratic action, and if the lure does not create such action itself, the rod tip and a change of reeling speed must produce a jump, a wobble and a glide.

There are many ways of getting this action. Reel a little ways and rest a second, then reel a bit more and repeat. Reel continuously, but pump the tip of the rod up and down, now slowly and with quite a swing, now sharply and for only a few inches. Mix 'em up! And add as many fancy steps to the lure as tip and reeling manipulation can produce. In clear water and with a line short enough to see the lure, one can work out quite a variety of antics for the offering that will possess much of the personal element. This is what makes one lure deadly in the hands of certain anglers and fishless when cast by others. Most lures are good, but each must be handled in the proper manner before it can deliver to the fullness of its possibilities.

The retrieve is the fish-getting part of bait-casting, and it is this phase of the game that often spells defeat for the *form extremists*. Laying a fly is nine-tenths of successful fly-casting; spotting a pot hole in the pads is but a mere beginning in the successful use of the short rod. Bait-casting is the art of *playing from the reel*, and the knowing angler waves aside those who would stress unduly form and tackle and method—he is concerned with the retrieve, with the lure and its behavior, far more than with some fancied standard.

Striking, Playing and Netting

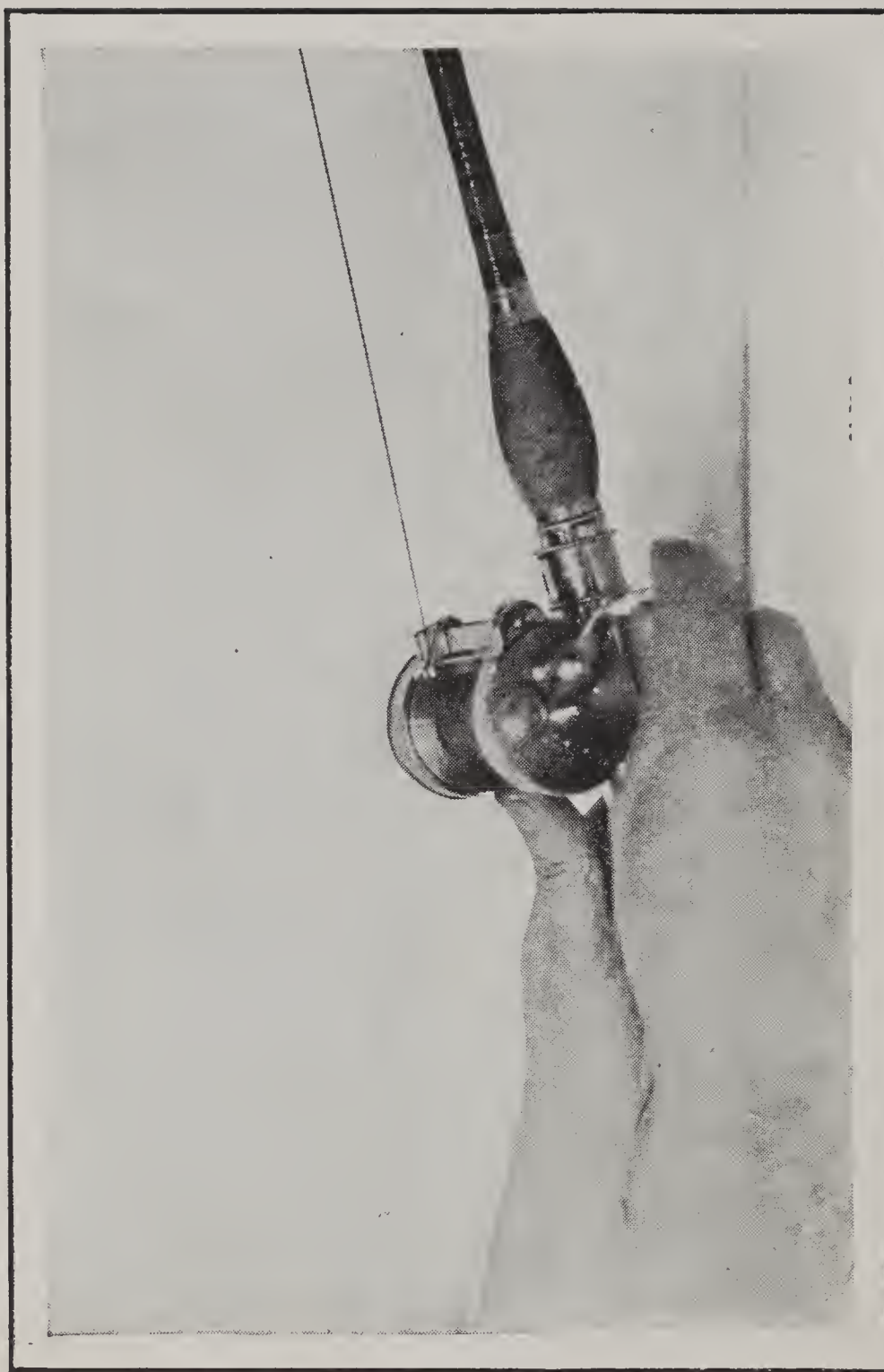
Setting the hook, or striking as it is sometimes called, is a very important matter in bait-casting for any type of fish. It is true that some fish hit the lure so viciously that they hook themselves after a fashion, but the angler will do well to make a practice of striking every fish. Ordinarily the point of the hook does not sink home to any depth when a fish closes upon a lure, and it is therefore necessary to drive it through the hard portions to insure its staying until the end of the battle. Should the point be seated in some tender and thin portion of the mouth, a strike may tear the hook from its hold, but this is better than permitting the fish to make two or three runs and then free itself. In the latter case the fish is frightened and will not strike again; in the former case little damage is done—the fish thinking (if think he can) that the “food” gave him a bit of a nip, and the chances are that he will hit the lure more savagely at the next opportunity.

Setting the hook in bait-casting is a full forearm movement as against the wrist set in fly fishing. The fish being larger as a rule and the mouth tougher, makes it essential that a rather heavy strike be employed. The

tiny and sharp hook of the flyman will sink to its bend easily with a slight twist of the wrist, but the larger hook used by the bait-caster will need considerable force to put it where it belongs. We would not have the angler think that he must *yank* the rod or swing it through a long arc to accomplish his purpose; merely add a little forearm force to the wrist action as the rod is snapped upward or to the right or left, as the case may indicate.

We have spoken of this strike as a *snapping of the rod* upward or to the side. In some ways this is a misstatement of the motion, since the action is really *started slowly* and *finished with a sharp ending*. If the start be made as in jerking on a line, calamity will follow, for the line may be broken where it is knotted to the lure or the tip will give up. This snappy start is what wrecks so many rods and so many lines in the hands of the inexperienced caster. But start the strike with ease, finish with a quick stroke after a slight bend is put in the tip, and both rod and line will stand a much heavier setting of the hook than is generally thought possible.

Great care must be used in learning the limitations of the particular rod. It is far better to understrike the fish than to put a permanent set in a valuable rod. In this connection it is well to note that a steel rod will not stand up under improper setting technique any more than will a bamboo, hickory or bethabara. We sometimes wish that the manufacturers of steel rods would not guarantee them against breakage, for it might be that anglers generally would then use just a wee bit of common sense in the matter of undue strain and the jerking treatment that usually is given this most excellent tool. One does not need to yank a fish out of the water in order to give the hook a good stiff set, but, on the other hand, sufficient force must be applied to insure a firm placement of the point.



A level-winder in action. Note position of left thumb, ready to check a run of the fighting fish

When the point sinks home, most fish will make a strong run, and it is at this state of the game that the "playing of the fish" begins. Give him his head on this first run but keep the line taut by pressing on the spooled line or a back-lash will develop. It is not wise to shut down too hard on the first run of a hooked fish unless he is making for cover in the form of dense vegetation or snags. Let him go, increasing the pressure on the line as he nears the end of the run. From this time on until the fish is netted, the rod should be *kept bent* in a curve with the tip elevated, so that the spring of the rod will take up any slack that may arise because of some quick turn of the fish toward the angler.

Every time that the fish starts a run, let him go, and every time add a little more thumb pressure to the line to make it more difficult for him to get very far with his attempt at freedom. When he stops, raise the rod slowly a couple of feet and reel in the line thus gained—not by dragging the fish as the reel revolves but by lowering the rod tip as the line spools. If he has not started another run when this line is in, raise the tip again and repeat the reeling process. Work the fish toward the boat or bank by raising the tip; gain line in spooling by lowering it again, but *always* keep the *tension*—the tension on the line is what tires the fish and makes netting possible.

Above all, do not be in a hurry to bring the fish in to the net. The chances are in the angler's favor when there are thirty or forty feet of line between the tip and the fish. As this decreases the chances of the fish increase. A scrappy bass on an eight to ten-foot line has the average angler at his mercy. Keep him away from the boat or bank until he is fully tired out, but keep him working all the time. When he nears the region where a net may be used, lower the rod tip and keep the fish swinging

around in a large figure eight until he is completely "all in"; or work him back and forth along the side of the boat until the net can be brought into play. When a fish is about spent, he will keep quiet, as a rule, so long as he is worked through the water.

Now, lower the net well down into the water; *work the fish past it once*, being ready to give him line if he starts a run on seeing the net in the water. Swing him around again if he does not run, and lead him up briskly over the mouth of the net. Raise the net with a firm and sure upward swing so as to permit the fish to shoot into it head first. Do not *scoop* with the net—just swing it up toward the surface, and as the fish's head comes well over the opening, drop the tip of the rod. The fish will settle, head first, into the net as it comes up—and continue the swing of the net up over the side of the boat. From the time the net starts up until it clears the side of the boat, the action should be a continuous swing, timed just right to meet the fish, quick enough to be clean and snappy act, but under no circumstances should it be a scoop or a jab.

The smaller fish may, of course, be netted side first or even tail first with the head held well up on a taut line; but the larger fish will, with one flip of the tail, shoot out of the net opening as soon as touched. Use a deep net, especially if members of the pike tribe will be taken. Thirty to thirty-six inches will not be too much in length, and the opening may well be from fifteen to eighteen inches across. Netting a fish is an art that few anglers have mastered.

Handling Leaping Fish

This subject is worth a few words all by itself and apart from the main discussion of playing the fish. We might even have restricted it still more, for of all the

fish that fall to the short rod, the black bass is the champion leaper beyond question, and we might have styled this section—handling leaping bass. Most of us are willing to admit that the bass is “inch for inch and pound for pound” the most famous fresh-water fighter of them all; but we will, regardless of inches or pounds, assert without reservation of any kind that he is the fastest, most erratic and strongest leaper of the whole fresh-water tribe. And we do not believe that we are alone in this opinion.

It is difficult to suggest methods of handling a leaping fish, for every jump has its own peculiarities and requirements. In general it may be said that a fish may be forced to stay in the water to some extent by keeping the tip of the rod close to the surface. A high tip will call a bass into the air in no time, hence we would recommend that the *tip be kept high*. No, this is not a misprint! We meant just that and nothing else. Keep the tip high and let 'em jump. Who wants to keep a fish from taking the air? That is the grandest sight and the most thrilling moment in all fishing—the air route! Let them jump by all means.

In handling a jumping fish there is but one necessary thing to accomplish—we should have said, to keep accomplishing—and that is to keep the line taut. We cannot tell how to do it, but it must be done or the fish will throw the lure or baited hook. The best recommendation that we can give is to watch for the jump, and when you see that he is coming out as told by the rising line, put a little more bend in the tip and hold. As he takes the air, this bend will furnish enough tension and enough play to keep everything tight. Do not, as you value your fishing as an art and a sport, do not “jerk him off his feet” while in midair! We have seen this recommended times without number, and it always goes against the grain.



A self-thumbbing and level-winding reel in action. Nothing to do but cast out and "turn the crank"

It is neither fair to the fish nor to the art of bait-casting, for a fish's one best bet is the air route, and bait-casting to be artistic is a playing from the reel game—a case of give and take under taut line conditions, with the jerks made possible by strong tackle barred.

Night Casting

Casting the night line is, of course, very similar to daylight casting, but there is some difference in the method employed because of the darkness. Everything must be done by the sense of touch alone, since there will be little or no light when the best casting obtains, and it is the part of wisdom to make certain changes in tackle and a definite selection of known water.

Night casting can best be done from a boat, for it will then be possible to get out into the clear, away from snags and heavy vegetation. The angler should choose his location during the daylight hours and see that his boat is placed in an open spot well away from trouble. This type of casting is most frequently employed during mid-summer, and since the fish are in deep water during the heat of the day, it is well to locate in near the rushes and pads, where these break off quickly into the depths. Open coves and small bays with deep water on the lake side will also be very fruitful spots, and a prime location will be just off the mouth of some lake tributary.

Perhaps the most important part of night equipment is the reel. This should be an anti-back-lash and level-winding winch. A skilled bait-caster will often use a plain level-winder or a plain self-thumber, sometimes a standard caster, but the freedom from trouble that the combined aids give is very much worth while. Personally we would not think of going out "for the night" without our "do it all" quads, and we have shot about as many lures with the short rod as any. Just get a first-class

back-lash in the dark and you will agree that our advice is right.

One should use slightly heavier lures and higher test lines at night; the former being easier to cast, and the latter good insurance against the night troubles that just will come. Regulation bass plugs and a sixteen-pound soft-braided silk will be about right, and of course the standard weight rods will be needed. We recommend the high-grade steel as being the night rod par excellence—the work is going to be a bit rough and it will test the staying power of any rod.

While one can use a variety of lures for night work, the surface plug is here at its best. The fish will be feeding near the surface and there will be little need to resort to a wobbler or the frog. We prefer the luminous finish, not that it will be a bit more attractive to the fish than the ordinary color combinations but because the angler can follow the plug as it works its way in during the retrieve, and often it is a glowing mark to point out the location of the fish if the battle is on the surface.

Lacking the luminous finish, use any surface lure with which fish have been taken. All white if you like, white with red head or any other pattern—it matters little. A BLACK lure is just as attractive at night as a white offering. You don't believe it? Well, neither did we—but we know that a black surface plug, a black bass bug and a Black Prince fly fished wet will take bass at night with regularity. Try it.

The lure should also be weedless. We know that we suggested weedless water, but we have caught weeds aplenty after dark in water that we were absolutely sure was just plain water all the way across and all the way down when viewed by daylight. Double hooked lures will avoid most of the trouble and may be weedless enough for most work.

Do not attempt to cast great distances—we have picked up bass within ten feet of the boat at night. But keep your feet still and move things in the boat with great care. Strange how sounds and jars caused by shifting the feet will carry through the water at night! Sing if you like, but keep your feet still.

The best lure is one that kicks up quite a fuss by day. Night reeling should be much slower than day reeling so the big rumpus will be softened down and a slow acting daylight lure will be very quiet at night.

A flashlight will be a great aid in netting the fish—and netting the fish is a man's job at night, even with a light. A companion will be more than welcome for many reasons BUT—be sure to use the overhead cast and cast ONLY at right angles to the long diameter of the boat. A hooked companion—let's think of something else!

Don't forget the "makin's." Never heard of a real night angler who didn't smoke a cob pipe; and last but not least, it is a mighty good plan to take two or three "loaded" reels along—we HAVE seen an anti-back-lash level-winding reel BACK-LASH!

Beating a Back-lash

It would be absolutely impossible to give directions for untangling a back-lash, yet there are a few general points that may help and, like the directions on a patent medicine of considerable advertising fame, the hints should "be taken early in the attack and before any other remedies have been tried." Once give a few hard pulls on a line that is in the bird's-nest stage and you'll need a line surgeon and not a line doctor.

Remember what causes the back-lash. The spool has been revolving with a forward rotation much faster than the line could get out from under the pillars. Hence the line is, in reality, but loosely spooled and will come off

readily if the angler sees to it that *there is no tight pulling*.

Start pulling *with ease* on the line that goes to the thumb presses firmly on the spool until the lure is yield to a *slight* pull, take a smooth stick, wire, nail, or even the fingers, and loosen the coils a bit here and there around the spool. Try a slight pull again. If it works, keep going; if it still sticks, loosen the coils some more. Keep this up and REMEMBER THIS: You must keep your temper, must keep cool and *must take your time!* The worst case of back-lashing will yield to careful manipulation. We have often worked for a long time on a bird's-nest with no apparent results, when all of a sudden something would give and the line would come freely from the spool.

Reels that take down easily and permit one to remove the spool often assist matters to a considerable extent. They also often make matters worse, and the result is a bad snarl that it will take hours to untangle. But, for a simple case, they will speed up results as a usual thing.

Keep everlastingly at it with delicate pulls and loosening movements and the trouble will yield. If it doesn't—call a line surgeon and put on a new line.

CHAPTER V

THE BAIT-CASTING LURE

Plugs

WE SHALL discuss the bait-casting plug first, because it is the lure that most closely parallels the development of the short rod in its own evolution from a heavy cedar block to the modern one-hooked lighter lure.

Regardless of the many shapes and forms, colors and patterns, fronts, bottoms, tops, backs and sides, there are only three types of plug baits on the market: *Surface lures*, *wobbling underwaters*, and *deep running plugs*—the old-fashioned underwater. Most surface lures float. Some will sink, but will rise to the surface when being reeled in toward the angler. Wobbling underwaters float when at rest, but dive and wriggle to a greater or less depth, depending upon the reeling speed. Deep running underwaters are sinking baits and come nearer the surface as the speed of reeling increases. We shall discuss each one separately.

Surface lures are variously built to come straight in, to wriggle in, and to glide back and forth as they approach the angler. They may or may not have collars of wood or metal to throw a spray (large or small) and may or may not have spinners in front and behind the lure. The idea is this: Sometimes it is desired to have a quietly moving surface bait—no spinners or collars; again, a slight ripple may be indicated—spinners added; or, quite a little spray may appeal to the fish—a collar of wood or metal; and last, the angler may wish a regular sputtering

bait—big collar, wings or any contraption to throw a spray and to keep the lure churning up the surface.

In a season's fishing the careful and successful angler will find a time when all of the above types of surface lures will be indicated. Should the amateur be in doubt as to the proper surface offering, he will do well to confine his casting to the lures with spinners or with a medium wood or metal collar. Such lures are uniformly successful when a surface lure is indicated.

The hooks on a surface lure should be hung low, and most plugs of this type have the hooks hung from the underside. Surface lures supplied with treble hooks are going out of use because double hooked lures hook just as well, hold better, are more weedless, are easier to carry in the kit, and give the fish a better opportunity to fight without getting all messed up in a bunch of trebles. A small fish that has been taken on a treble gang plug is usually not in shape to be returned to the water with any sure chance of recovery.

Colors of surface lures are unimportant. The fish is below the plug and it appears as a dark patch against the brighter sky. No light filters through it, as in the case of an artificial fly, so the angler may choose his surface plug colors to suit his own idea of the beautiful. The surface lure is attractive because of its action.

Plugs of this type are to be cast when the fish are in the shallow areas near shore. The angler should study the retrieve of his lure until he can make it behave in a variety of ways. Fast reeling, slow reeling and again a jerky retrieve, all are good at times.

Wobbling underwaters are built to ride on the surface when at rest, but dive and wriggle or glide from side to side on being retrieved. These lures were developed to meet the needs of the man who does not know how to make a regular underwater do "tricks" when it is coming

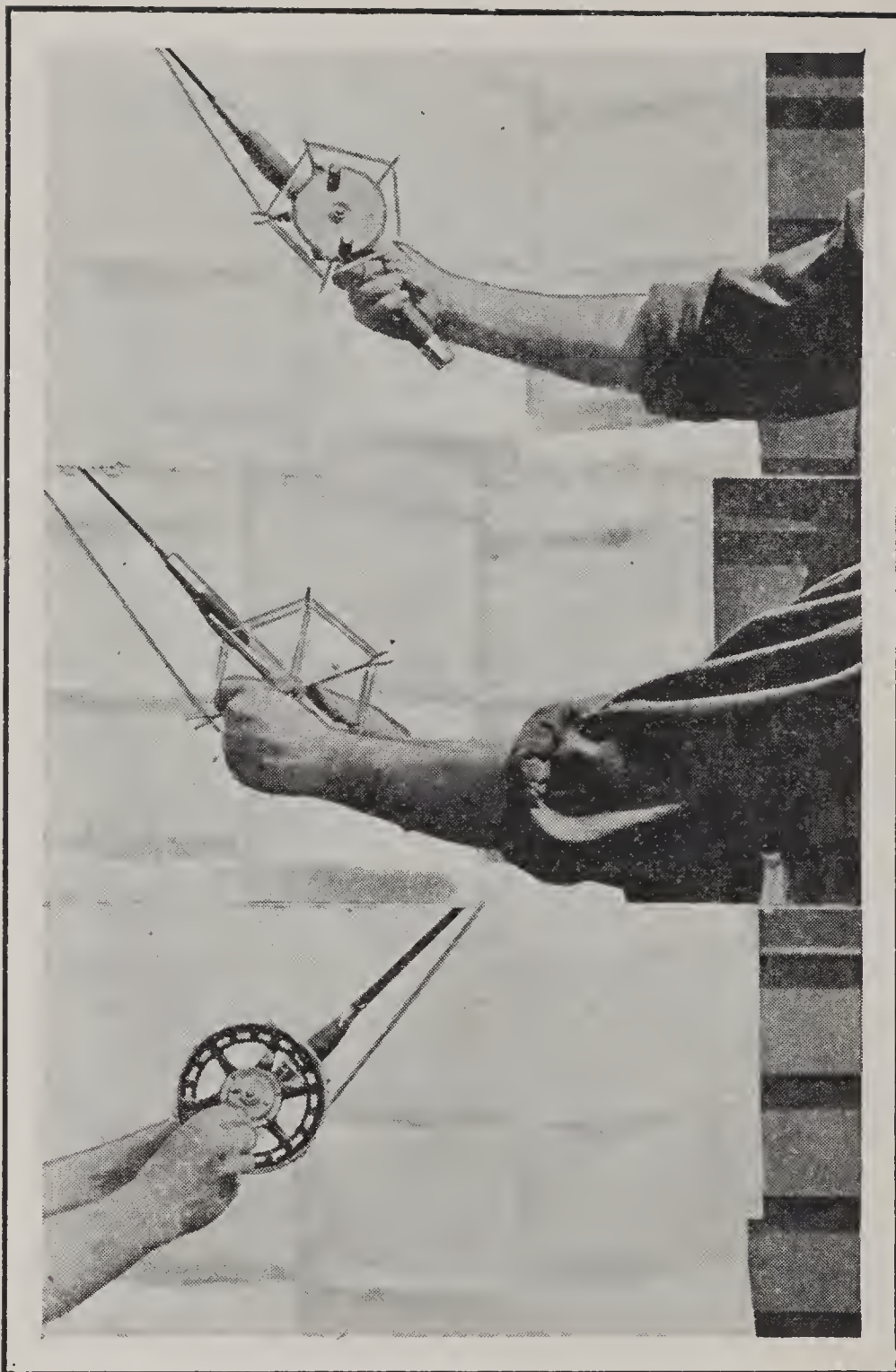
in—a knack that the expert bait-caster acquires in the course of much experience. They are usually without spinners of any kind and have the head, or front portion, so designed as to create the wobbling motion, or have a metal collar or fin for the same purpose.

These lures also ride at various depths and are governed as to depth by the shape of the metal collar or by the placement of the line eye, or both. Many of them are so arranged that they can be used as surface lures by adjusting the metal attachment, some ride just below the surface, others dive to quite a depth. All have an individual type of wiggle or wobble, yet all are imitations of the swimming action of a crippled or wounded minnow—the one best bet in a bait-casting plug.

We would not advise a great assortment of action types in this plug. It is better that the angler learn to handle a few of them in a taking manner. When once the plug has been thoroughly mastered, the angler will swear by his offering, and what is more, will take fish with it when another angler, using the same lure, will draw few if any strikes. Practically all wobbling underwaters will take fish aplenty in the hands of a man who really knows how to put them through their stints.

Hooks hang from the underside in these plugs as well as in the surface lures, for a side hook tends to spoil the wobbling action. We recommend the double hook here for the same reasons advanced previously.

Colors of wobbling underwaters are of much more importance than special colors in the surface offering, and we will treat of these in connection with the underwater lures. However, the action is the great thing. If it resembles some crippled food of the fish or works in such a manner as to call forth a strike because of something we choose to call anger, the success of the plug is assured.



Indiana pattern reels. Upper—Turned one-quarter to left for spooling. Middle—Line properly wound for spooling. Lower—Using right hand in winding

Plugs of this type are to be cast in the deeper waters around the pads and fringing the rushes and weed growth, or over the deep-water weed patches. Learn to vary the action of the plug by a change of reeling pace and by tip manipulation. It is surprising what a variety of steps one can work into the action of these plugs when reeling and tip action are combined.

Underwater or deep running plugs are the original bait-casting plugs. They are intended for deep-water work when fish are at depths that make the underwater wobblers unattractive. These plugs, for the most part, run in a straight line, and it is necessary for the angler to tip handle them in order to get the crippled action so attractive to game-fish.

They are, almost without exception, equipped with a front or a front and back spinner; the hooks hang from the sides of the lure, and they rely upon their spinner flash and the color pattern for their fish taking qualities largely.

Color, in a lure of this kind, is very important, and the design is that of a minnow. The more nearly the offering exhibits the minnow appearance the greater will be its taking qualities. If the angler can add the crippled action as well, the value of the lure will be increased.

The deep running plugs are of use in the summer when the fish are in very deep water. Cast them well away from the boat, let them settle down to the bottom, and retrieve just off the bottom slowly and erratically. In the hands of an old hand at the game these lures will be very effective; reeled in without any tip manipulation they are apt to be a disappointment. They are great weed catchers since it is difficult to equip them with double or single hooks, and their sinking nature gets the angler into troubles without number. Some are built for single hooks and do very creditable work.

Plug color patterns are of three main kinds: Those that imitate some natural food, the solid colors, and the grotesque color schemes. In general the highly colored creations are suited to early season and late season angling; the solid colors and natural food imitations being the better in the summer, though they are very attractive in the early and late months, as well as the rainbow and spotted shades.

For surface lures the red head and white body is standard. We believe that there is no better combination for this type of plug. Wobbling underwaters may need more decoration. Red head with white, silver or gold body will be good. Frog and scale finishes and spots of various colors at times are attractive. Solid white, red, yellow and even black will be taking on occasion. In the deep runners we have a great fondness for decided minnow colorations: Perch, redbfin, shiner and the like; also the green black with white below and the brown black with white. All red and all black, with a possibility of all yellow, are often excellent in midsummer; and the red head with white, silver or gold body may turn the trick when all else fails. Different waters and different fish call for a knowing choice on the part of the angler—no one plug will catch fish of every kind on every water, advertisements of overzealous makers to the contrary notwithstanding!

There is a growing tendency to cast smaller and smaller plugs. Only a few years ago plugs with five gangs of hooks were frequently seen in the bait-caster's kit. Now they are curiosities in the tackle shops. The three gang plug is seldom cast save in the old style underwater where two side gangs and one tail treble are retained in order to give the lure proper balance. But even this type of plug can be built with a single double placed underneath the lure, and it is only a question of

time until all bait-casting plugs will carry not more than two doubles or two singles. Even now the single hook plug is on the market, and when properly designed, such an offering is far better than the old multi-gang plugs in permanent hooking efficiency and in sportsmanship. The modern angler is placing his faith in the lighter and smaller plugs.

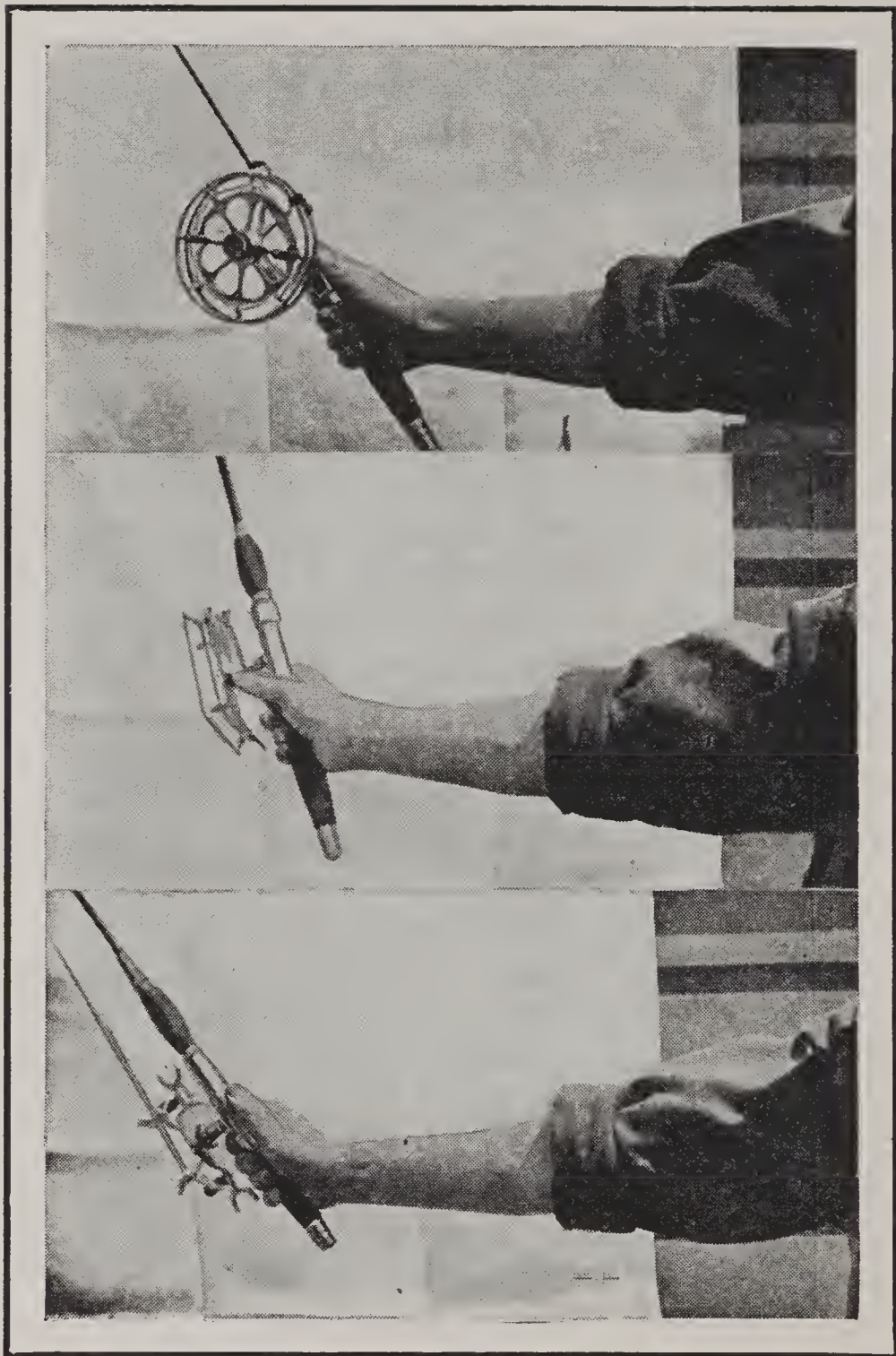
Rinds and Chunks

One of the nicest bait-casting offerings is the pork rind and the pork chunk. The rind is a flexible piece of rind so cut as to resemble the action of a struggling minnow; the chunk is cut full and thick so that it will ride on the surface. The minnow-like rind is used in the same water as the wobbling underwater plug; the chunk, for surface work in the thick pads and rushes.

Pork rind has long been a favorite in the combination: Spoon—fly—rind. A red or yellow fly was the basis of this combination, but it is possible and profitable to make use of other patterns. This lure makes a standard offering for practically all game-fish from crappie to muskellonge.

Various rigs have been devised for the holding of the rind, from plain hooks to weedless hooks with some sort of a spinner attachment—all more or less modifications of the first combination. Some carry the rind flat, others make it ride on edge, all are very much worth while. Pork rind being very tough, such a lure will last for a day's ordinary casting and it is not necessary to keep changing baits.

The chunk is used in connection with a plain weedless hook as a rule, though a small spinner may be added if desired. Being a surface spattering bait, it is a fine lure for casting in thick pads, where it rides easily and presents a very taking appearance.



Thumbing two types of Indiana pattern reels. (Upper and middle.) Using reel as an anti-back-lash. (Lower)

It is customary to have a bit of red in connection with the rind or chunk, and if a red fly is not used, a bit of red yarn can be tied to the hook or about the front of the rind or chunk. A dash of red is always attractive.

The rind and chunk have always been considered sportsmanlike baits because the lure carries but one hook, aside from the small hook or snap to which the rind is attached. Its attractive feature lies in its crippled minnow action.

Spoons

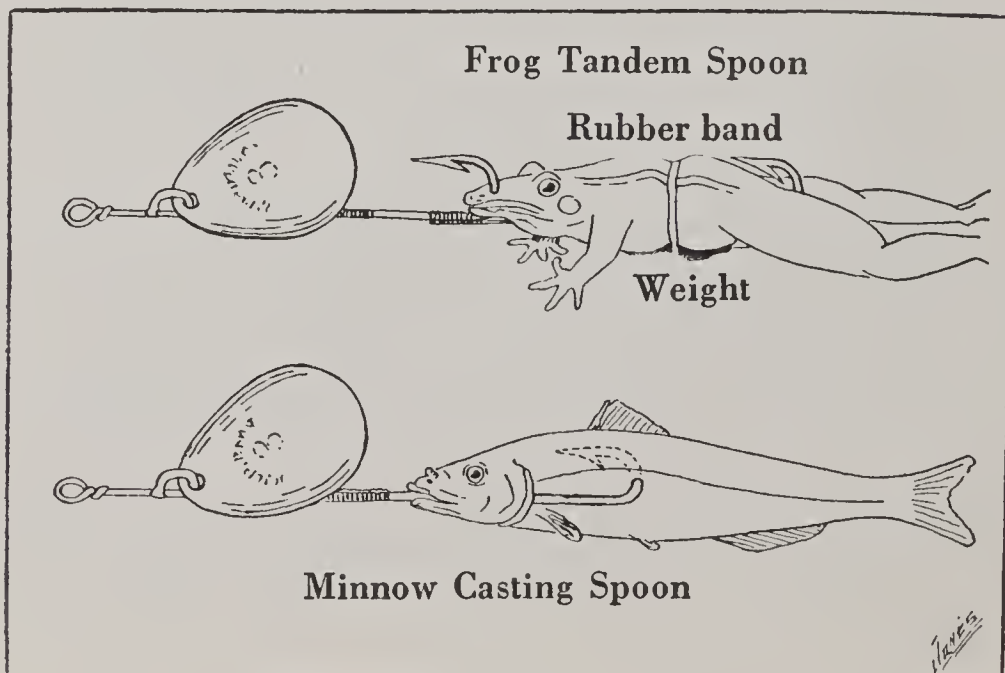
One of the nicest bait-casting offerings is the spoon hook. This may be either the spoon and single hook fly or spoon and plain hook to which a frog, minnow or rind is added. The old style treble hook spoon is still a great favorite, but knowing anglers are discarding it for the single hook fly, because the latter is just as good a hooker, is a better holder, and is more weedless as well as being considered more sportsmanlike.

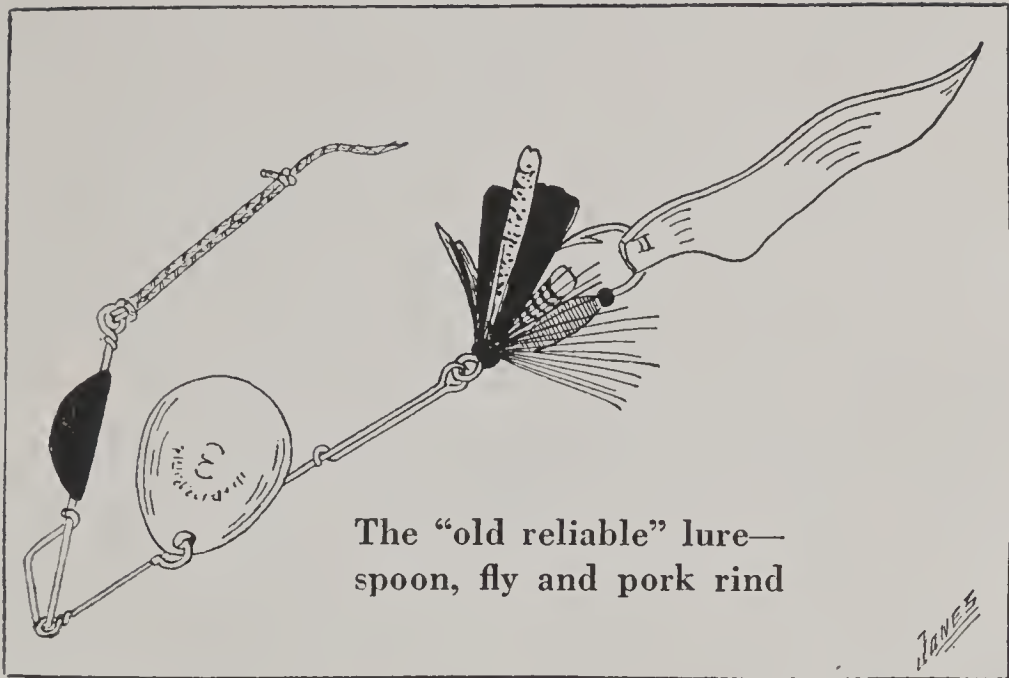
Especially for the pike tribe the wobbling type of spoon is a prime favorite, and this is also a great lure for lake trout and salmon. Such a spoon is usually equipped with a plain treble or a plain single hook instead of the customary feathered or bucktail gang.

Spoons are usually nickel or silver colored, though brass, copper and various colored spoons are at times indicated. It is well to have an assortment for certain waters, and certain fish show a decided preference for some special metal or color. When a bright flash is desired, the silver colored spoon is indicated; less flash—the brass and copper or enameled blades. Some anglers desire a large single spoon when after large fish, while others demand a smaller blade in tandem. Both styles are good.

Long slim blades spin close to the shank, oval blades spin wider, and round blades spin at almost right angles to the shank of the spoon. When it is desired to have the fish strike the spoon itself, a slim blade is indicated; when the spoon is followed by a bait, such as a frog or minnow, it is wise to use a round blade so that the fish will lose sight of the spoon as it approaches and be attracted to the bait where the hook is placed. One should use a close spinning blade when fish are striking short; a round blade when there is a tendency to over-strike. This applies, of course, to fish that strike from the side; a rear striking fish will take either blade equally well.

Good spoons for the bait-caster will run in size from a No. 3 to a No. 5 and may need a bit of weight, such as a two-ringed sinker, fastened some six or eight inches above to give sufficient pull for casting. Very light weight rods with eight to ten pound test lines will usually handle most of the spoons without extra weight being added. The finest rod for this work is a five-foot two bamboo weighing an even four ounces.





Spoon blades may be either plain metal or fluted. Both spin equally well, and it is up to the angler to take his choice. Do not make the mistake of using a blade that is too large, No. 3 to No. 5 will be large enough for most fishing, and a No. 3 tandem slim blade makes a fine size for bass, wall-eyes and pike, where the latter do not run to any great size. Flies should be selected with a view to the waters to be fished, for bass especially; for wall-eyes, a fly with considerable white, as a Parmacheene Belle or white bucktail, will be found very taking; for pike, solid colors in red, white, yellow, or natural bucktail color will do the work nicely. On bass, do not fail to try out solid black, such as the Black Prince—black is being recognized more and more as a great bass getter.

We do not favor the phantom minnows as casting baits, though they are good wall-eye lures, yet the metal devons are excellent, especially on small-mouth in the streams.

Frogs and Minnows

The frog is the universal live offering as cast via the bait-casting rod. There are many good frog-casting rigs

on the market—those with trailer hooks that can be tied around the body of the frog being right for most work. Unless one is casting a live frog, hooked through the lips, in a manner to permit it to do its own swimming and kicking around, there is no valid reason for using the frog *alive*. A dead frog will hold to the rig better, and with a bit of tip work will make a better presentation of the bait. We make it a point *always* to kill a frog before using it as a casting bait.

The minnow is seldom lip hooked for regular bait-casting. Run the hook through the mouth, out the gill cleft and push the point through the body just in front of the back fin. This gives a solid hooking of the bait, and with it one can cast without fear of losing the minnow. For most bait-casting the use of a small spoon, No. 3 or No. 3½ round blade, is a fine addition to either the frog or the minnow, and it is a great help in connection with the rind as well.

A four-inch minnow is a good length for most work on bass, wall-eyes and the smaller pike. There will be more days when the angler will use smaller minnows successfully than when a longer length will be indicated. We have taken some mighty nice fish on minnows of a size ordinarily used on crappie—especially during hot weather. Pike are especially fond of the larger offerings.

CHAPTER VI

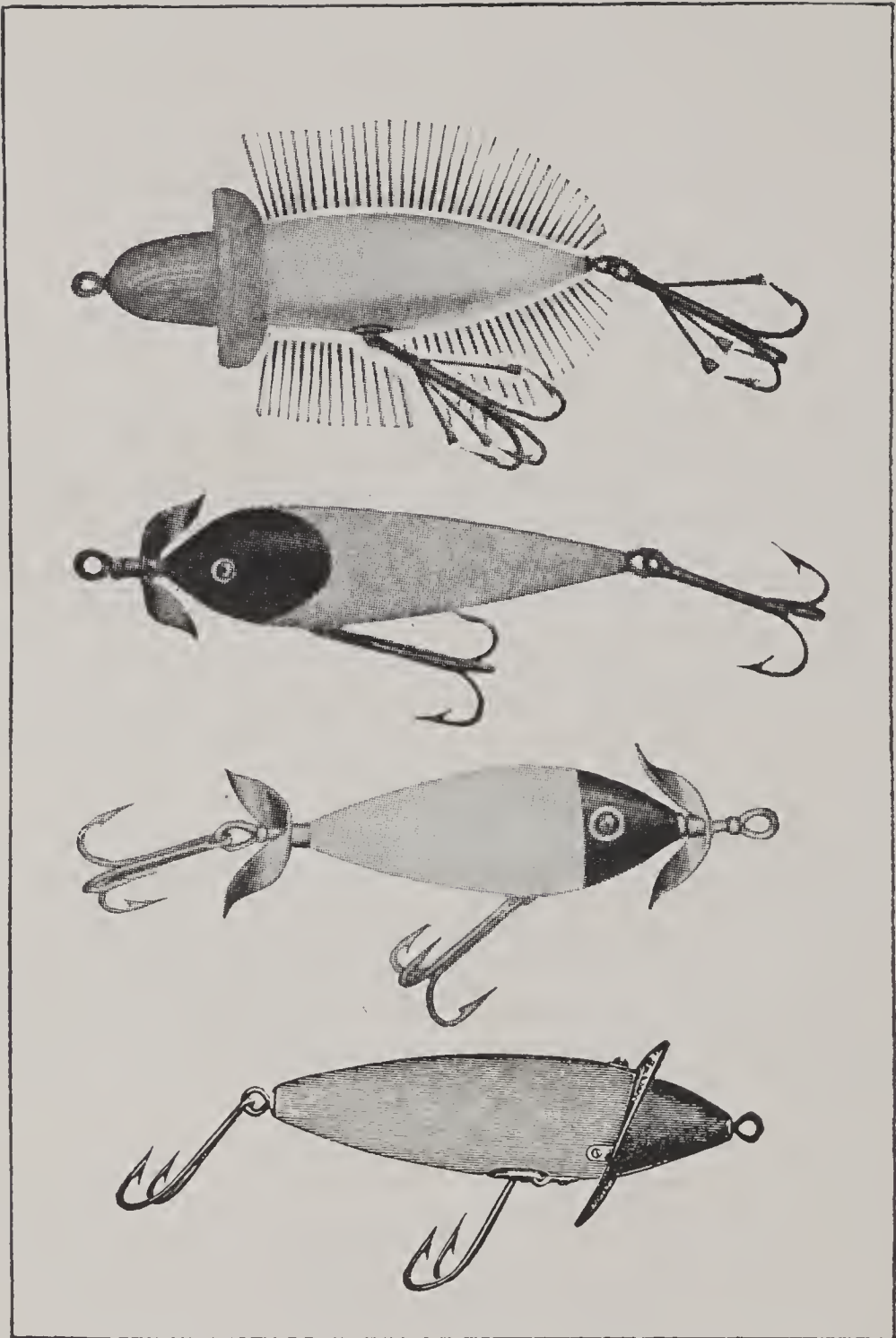
BAIT-CASTING WATERS—LAKES

The Shallows—How and What to Cast

THE SHORELINE is the haven of the bait-caster, for it is here that game-fish are found during the greater part of the fishing season. Their shore stay is largely due to the presence of cover coupled with an abundant food supply, both being necessary to cause them to remain. When shore waters develop too high a summer temperature, the fish will migrate to the weed-beds, deep-water bars and the spring holes. It will be necessary at such times to go down after them if any success is expected or to cast shore areas at night and on clouded days.

The shoreline exhibits many kinds of water in a trip around the average lake, each variety demanding a somewhat different lure and different methods. We shall endeavor to give an outline of *some* successful offerings and methods, trusting the angler will appreciate the fact that he must work out his own precise line of activity as the conditions appear before him.

One of the most fruitful shore areas, and one little fished by the average angler, is the dense vegetation—be it pads, rush growth or the multitude of other plant forms that grow in masses in shallow waters. Game-fish love to lie in the open places below the matted tops and a lure will be successful if it can be retrieved over and through their hiding places. There is no lure that will fill the bill quite as effectively as the simple weedless hook and pork chunk. In more open growth a rind may be used,



Surface types of wooden lures

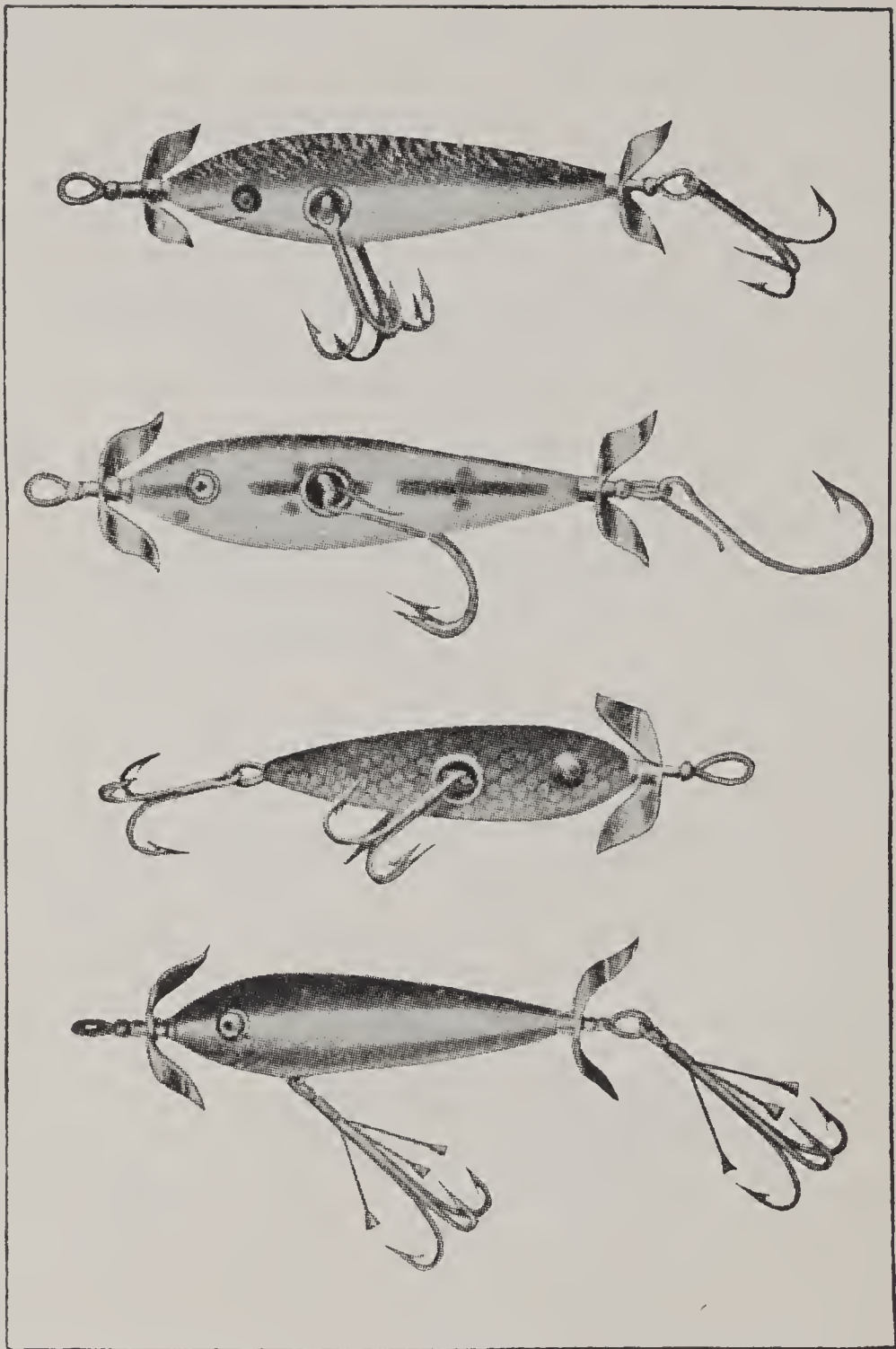
or even the frog or weedless bass fly, but for right down weedy water, the chunk with its hopping, erratic surface action will draw plenty of strikes if the fish are present. Shoot it right into the dense weeds and work it through the little spots of open water. Many fish will be lost because of the pull that they get on a weed caught line, but often *no* fish will be hooked if this water is passed.

Where the water is shallow and some open areas appear, it will be possible to make use of the surface lures equipped with weedless hooks, the weedless casting spoons and rind kits, and the weedless frog tandems. Even these will pick up weeds aplenty, but one must catch some weeds or the chances are that no fish will be taken.

Still more open water will appear as pot holes in the pads, open spots between the rush growth, and runways between the areas of dense growth. Here, also, the weedless lures suggested above may be indicated, but the angler will do well to see that they are not *as weedless*, for one can often manipulate an open hook through this type of water. Cast the lures into every little pocket and open spot, and do not fail to drop the offering right on the vegetation—hopping it off into the open areas.

Just outside the pads and the rush growth there is usually deeper open water. This is the field of the wobbling underwater, the pork rind rig, the open casting spoon and the frog on an open tandem. Often in quite deep water the surface lure will win out, especially in the dusk of evening, the night, or early morning. Where the surface lures fail, bend on the above lures and work every bit of the water near the growth and even the deeper lakeward area.

Approach the down timber, the snags and the rocky shoreline with care and pick it all over, foot by foot, with the lure that seems to fit the situation—surface if the water is shallow; wobbler, rind, spoon or frog if it



Underwater types of wooden lures

appears too deep for good surface work. Remember that fish may be lurking behind even the scantiest cover, and the more open and clear the area the more care must be taken by the angler to reach the desired spots with a long line.

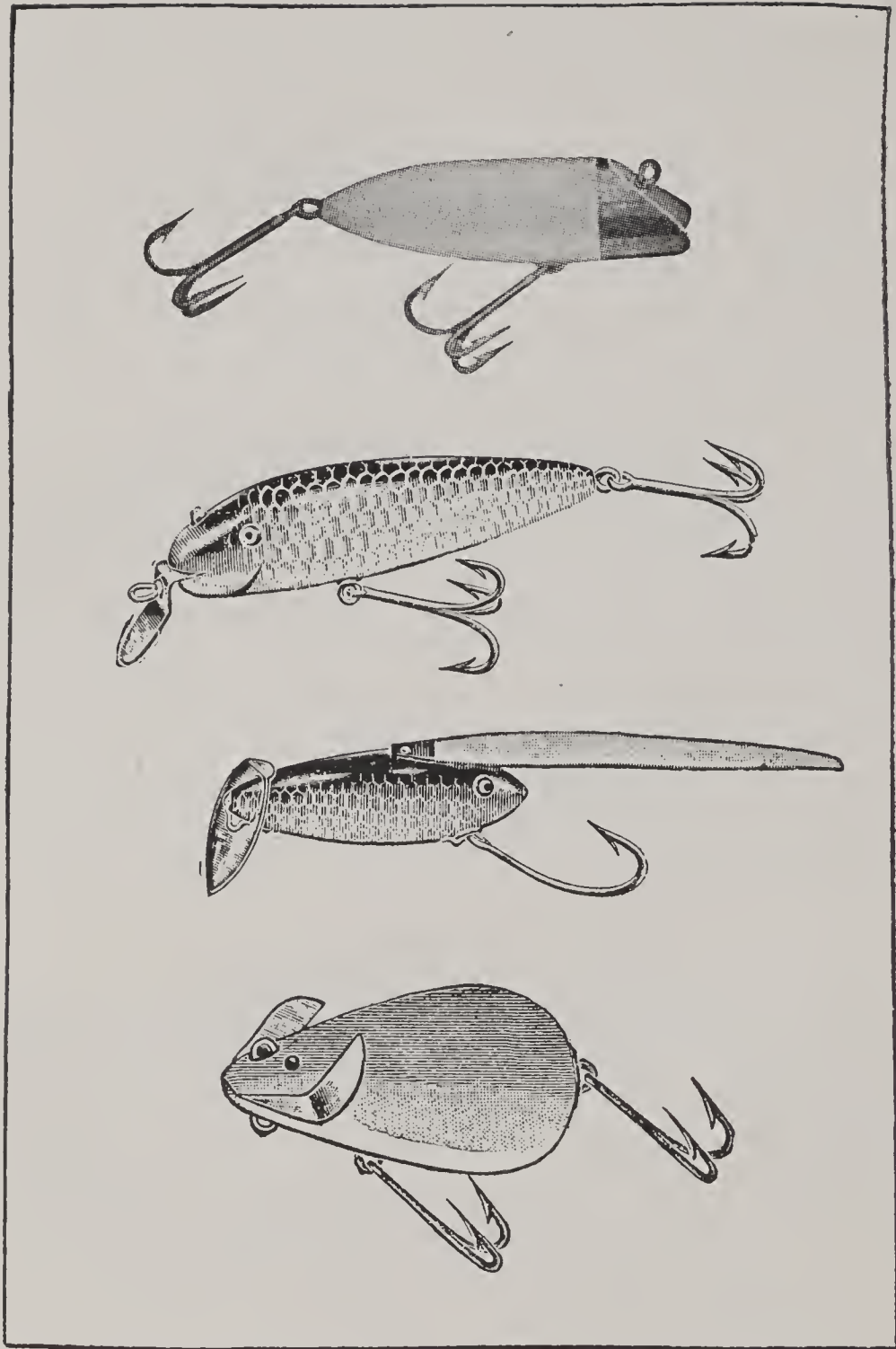
Shore areas are best cast from a boat, standing well away from the vegetation and working in toward the shore. It is possible, however, to cast from the shore or to wade the more shallow portions, and frequently wonderful fishing may obtain in this way.

Shore fish are sometimes very easily frightened, again it seems almost impossible to put them to flight. It is well to approach every casting area with the thought in mind that only the most careful casting will win. Drop the lure lightly and from a distance, working up to a splash cast and the short line if conditions indicate that such methods will win. We have seen anglers spoil a good piece of water by going after the fish with slam bang methods, and again we have witnessed these same methods win fish in numbers. It all depends, but take it easy first—no harm will be done thereby.

Working the Weed-beds

In practically every lake the bait-caster will find patches of weed-beds in the more open and deeper waters, well away from the shoreline. These are very fruitful areas especially for members of the pike tribe and for wall-eyes on occasion. This vegetation rises from a considerable depth to some few feet below the surface and it is a favorite haunt of game-fish on the more favorable days in midsummer.

In the evening, at night, and in the early morning a surface lure will often draw nicely over this type of water, but for the best results the bait-caster will do well to use the wobblers, the casting spoons with fly, rind or



Wobbler types of wooden lures

frog, and this is the one best place to cast a minnow of reasonable size.

Work the surface of the bed, the sides well down, and even let the lure, especially the frog and minnow, sink well into the weeds before retrieving. If wall-eyes are present, they will lie in the weeds, and a lure hopped out of the patch into the clear side waters will be very attractive. A medium-sized frog is a wonderful wall-eye bait in such a location as this.

For the lone angler there is no more favorable water than the deep-water weed areas. The boat can be placed upwind and permitted to drift down over the patch, while the caster covers all water easily and without attention to the oars. Trolling around these beds will yield big when the angler tires of the casting game, and with the possible exception of deep water fringing the rush growth, there is no better opportunity to connect with a giant pike or muskellonge.

Deep-water Casting

With the coming of the very warm days of midsummer, game-fish, especially bass, will seek out the deeper parts of the lake, deep-water bars and spring areas. When in such places the surface and wobbling lures will not draw and it will be necessary for the angler to go down to the fish if any are to be taken. Usually, too, the fish are not very active when in the depths and a slowly moving bait will be more attractive than a rapidly moving spoon or plug. For this reason frogs and medium large minnows should be cast over bars and spring-holes, well weighted so that they may be retrieved slowly just off the bottom.

Live bait, carefully cast, will often be the taking lure at this time, but a dead frog or minnow can be tip manipulated so that it will be equally attractive. This tip

work is something difficult to describe, but it consists of a mixture of tiny jerks, trembles, slow glides and stops, so placed and timed as to keep the bait in erratic action. It is not difficult, but there is just a bit of a knack in working it out.

In plugs, wobblers may be weighted so as to run quite deep in the water but the best plug offering is the old fashioned underwater — the original wooden “minnie.” We prefer that these be in natural food imitation such as the green or dark back with white below, the various scale finishes, the perch, chub, redbfin, pikie and other color combinations that make an attractive minnow-looking plug.

These plugs should be cast, allowed to settle well to the bottom and then reeled in with the tip manipulation. Get the last part of that advice, *tip manipulation*; that is just the difference between casting an underwater successfully and drawing a blank. We like an underwater, it gets fish for us, but we also know how unattractive a straight reeled plug usually is and how many anglers have given up the old style plug entirely.

Weighted pork rind rigs can well be cast into the depths, and some of them will not need the addition of a weight because of their heavy bodies. There are also many spoon combinations that can be sent down to the deep lying fish as a trial offering, but usually spoons must be worked too rapidly to be attractive to the sluggish summer game-fish. We have found that natural buck-tail single flies, tied full and behind a small spinner, will often wake up the bass and pike at such times.

Try everything when the fish are in deep water, and when everything fails, try again—or get the bait rod and go after pan-fish. If you must cast, then get out early and late or try the night game in the coves and along the shoreline bordering deep-water beds.

CHAPTER VII

BAIT-CASTING WATERS—STREAMS

Casting Rapid Waters

STREAM CASTING is excellent sport for the light rod enthusiast. Here the angler should use only the smaller plug baits, especially the natural finishes and the white, gold and silver bodies with red heads. Many plugs will do, especially on certain waters, and we have a fondness for the natural finishes. But plug baits are not in the running on stream fish with the small spoon, fly and pork rind combination or the spoon, single hook and minnow. A small frog will often be indicated or a bunch of big, red earthworms in place of the minnow. The pork rigs are fine and the plain single hook spoons in the smaller sizes will take fish aplenty.

For casting with the short rod the pools and long deep-water reaches are probably best, though the angler should work the fast-water areas carefully if after the small-mouth. Just below the riffles, rapids and miniature falls is a fruitful locality and the deep ledges along the shoreline are also good. Swirls and deep pools will yield well in many cases, especially during warm weather, and for summer casting the dusk of evening is the prime time.

Every submerged rock, every bit of down timber, every possible natural cover may yield a goodly fish, while the shore eddies will contain pike as will also the deep pools and sandy spots where some creek or smaller tributary enters. The stream caster will find frequent use for a plain hook baited with frog, minnow, helgramite or crab, weighted just enough to cast and retrieve very slowly

Casting loop knot



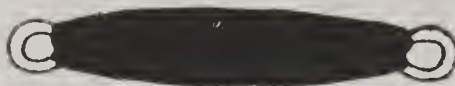
Snap swivel



Non-kinking swivel sinker



Two-ring casting sinker



Dipsey sinker

Jones

along the bottom or permitted to float down over the riffles into the pools. This, to be sure, savors of bait fishing but it is at least hybrid casting and hence is mentioned here.

Perhaps the best offering is a small spoon and single fly used on a light rod—the fairy wand of the bait-caster. It is a near approach to fly-casting and is stream sport par excellence. We favor a No. 3 round blade and flies tied to a No. 2 or No. 1/0 hook depending upon the fish. Excellent stream flies can be selected from any bass fly assortment, but red and white (Lake George), yellow (Colonel Fuller), orange (Oriole), dark (Montreal), black (Black Prince) will always be welcome. Royal Coachman, Alexandria, Babcock, Lord Baltimore, Jock Scott, Professor, Seth Green, Grizzly King and others are also good flies to follow a spinner either with or without a strip of rind.

Sluggish Streams

We need have little to say about the casting of sluggish streams because this becomes either stream casting or lake casting, depending upon the size and the freedom from current as well as depth. Big waters will need lake methods and lures; smaller rivers will take stream medicine.

In general, it may be said that sluggish waters will call for lake methods far more frequently than for the smaller and lighter fast-water offerings and types of angling. While it is customary to cast fast-water streams from the bank or by wading, sluggish waters call for a boat as a usual thing. Drifting down a tree-fringed river, casting to the bank and the overhanging growth will yield excellent fishing, and no doubt about it. We know of anglers who prefer this type of fishing above all other kinds of casting; some prefer lake waters—but oh you

white-water streams with your small-mouthed bass that fight it out in the air!

Work every snag and bit of cover for bass, every pocket, cove and eddy for pike, and cast the deep waters for wall-eye—getting the lure well down and bringing it in slowly. The frog is a wonderful bass bait in sluggish rivers, for here we usually find the large-mouthed species; just as we would cast a minnow in fast streams for the small-mouth.

Somewhat larger offerings will do for big water, though it is the part of wisdom to hold to the medium and small sizes where plugs are at the terminal end of the cast.

CHAPTER VIII

WEATHER, SEASONS AND FISH

THE BAIT-CASTER will do well to pay but little attention to weather conditions. When the opportunity comes—go fishing. We know all about the “thus and so” of the east wind and the west wind, the full moon and the thunder shower, but our advice is given in all *kindness*—go fishing when the spirit moves. We add a little table that may or may not be of value on your waters; it is but a general statement of usual conditions that may help those who know little of fish and fishing. Take it for what it is worth to you.

Spring

Small-mouthed bass: Work below riffles, pools with rocks, rock ledges and the rock and gravel shoreline of lakes, casting to all types of cover.

Large-mouthed bass: Work shoreline high banks, shoreline weeds, pads and rushes, coves and shallow meadows, casting to all cover.

Pike and muskellonge: Work pools, coves, connecting runs between lakes, outlets and inlets, sandy shoreline and just outside pads, weeds and rushes, casting to more open water than for bass.

Wall-eyed pike-perch: Work the deep water and sandy bars and points of rivers, deep-water bars and any deep water just off weedy and rush-grown shoreline, casting a deep lure running close to the bottom.

Summer

Small-mouthed bass: Work same water as in spring, adding the fast-water areas in streams; get well down in

lakes over rock bars and spring holes by day, same water as above for evening and early morning casting.

Large-mouthed bass: Work deep water, deep-water weed-beds and spring holes by day, shoreline bordering deep water evening and morning, clouded days and at night.

Pike and muskellonge: Deep-water weed-beds, bars and any deep water by day; same water as in spring for evening, morning, clouded days and cool weather.

Wall-eyed pike-perch: Deep-water rock bars, deep-water weed-beds, shoreline bordering deep water, morning, mid-day and evening.

Fall

Small-mouthed bass: Same as spring, but add stream fast-water areas.

Large-mouthed bass: Same as spring, but will be found quite generally in shallow areas.

Pike and muskellonge: Same as spring and summer; great rovers and feeders in the fall, will be picked up in unexpected places.

Wall-eyed pike-perch: Same as spring and summer but may hold more closely to deep rock bars than to deep-water vegetation.

If the angler will keep in mind the fact that fish are in the shallows in spring, work out to deep water as the summer heat approaches (coming in toward the shore from the deep areas at night and on cool, clouded days) and return to the shoreline in the fall, he should have little difficulty in finding a position where there are fish.

CHAPTER IX

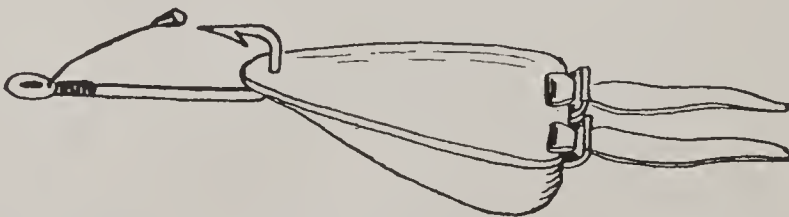
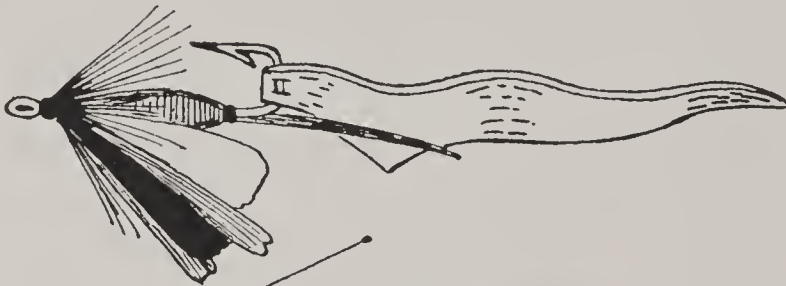
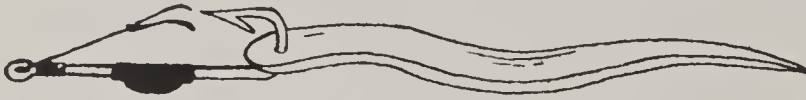
CARE OF BAIT-CASTING TACKLE

Rods

SPLIT BAMBOO and solid wood rods must be well cared for if they are to give good service. There are two main points to be considered at all times in this care. First: The varnish coat must be kept intact to shut out the moisture which, in the bamboo, will work its way into the glued sections and spoil the action of the rod even if the strips hold, and in the solid wood, will cause warpage. Second: The sections must be kept free from strain that would cause a bend to become a set.

The angler will need to keep a watchful eye on the varnish and windings and be sure that everything is in tip top shape when the season opens. It is not necessary to apply varnish as frequently as some writers claim (two or three times a season) unless the rod is in constant daily use and the weather is wet or of that sticky type that so tries the souls of both men and—varnish. The average bait-caster's rod will go through a season, possibly two of them, nicely with but a thin coat of high-grade rod varnish applied in the early spring. It is an easy matter to over-do the varnish job so that it will dull the rod action and we would advise having the rod rewound and revarnished by the manufacturers or some reliable tackle shop when it appears that the varnish is getting too thick. Of course a rod crank will desire to do his own work—we are not talking to rod cranks—but a high-grade rod should receive high-grade service.

Pork Rinds



Pork chunk with trout size rind tails

JONES

There will be more trouble with the ferrules than with anything else—they will get loose. It is a simple matter, however, to remove them, to scrape away the old cement, to heat cement and ferrule and warm the rod, and then to replace. Pins must be pushed in, if present, and *never used again*. We have never been able to figure out just why some makers will use ferrule pins when they are of no earthly use and are only a bother when the ferrule must be reset. Every angler who desires to care for a rod properly should know something of rod building, and an excellent little book on this subject can be secured from the magazine that presents this handbook.

Windings will need to be replaced occasionally and the silk should be used without wax if it is to retain its color. After winding pass quickly through a flame and then coat the winding with collodion (very thin application) or with white shellac, drying well before varnishing. Collodion is best if properly applied since shellac *will* darken the winding to some extent though not as much as plain varnish. There are, also, special preparations for retaining the color of winding silk—most of them collodion or shellac in some form.

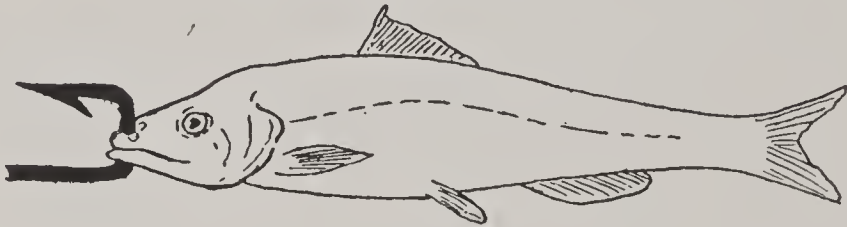
Rods should be stored in a place where frequent changes of temperature will not be found. It is well to suspend the rod from the tip joint if it is to be out of use for some time for, even if lying flat, it will have a tendency to conform to the surface on which it rests, and surfaces are not always *flat*. Under no circumstances keep the rod tied up in a cloth bag unless it is on a form or a curved tip will be the result.

Steel rods must be gone over carefully with an oiled rag and oil must also be run into the ferrules to avoid joint rusting. Most steel rods that give up have rusted through *from the inside*. Keep the rod oiled at all times and as faithfully as a gun crank cares for his pet rifle.

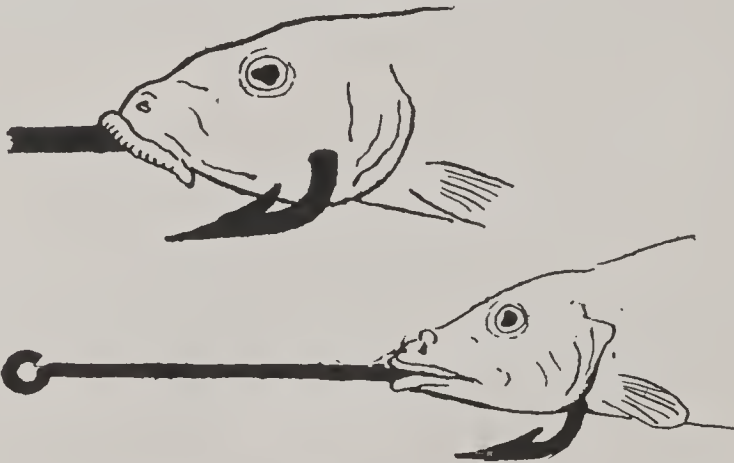
Hooking live bait



Lip-hooked frog and minnow



Cheek-hooked sucker



Hooked through gill cleft

JONES

You will then have a rod that will give good service. Do not abuse a steel rod just because it *is* steel.

Reels

Most of the care of the reel should be a prevention rather than a cure. There is nothing that so quickly wrecks a good bait-casting winch as a bit of sand or other hard substance getting into the "insides" of the reel. Keep the reel off the ground at all times and when not in use, keep it in a reel bag. Do not carry it loose in the coat pocket for pockets always contain grit of various kinds as well as dust and dirt. The former will cut the moving metal parts and the latter will gum up the works so that a poor action results.

Water will not hurt a reel as much as some seem to think. There is very little steel about a high-class reel, mainly the spool and gear journals and click spring, and these are so coated with oil that water will have little effect upon them. Of course it is best to keep them from getting wet and one should not put a wet reel away without giving it a chance to dry out thoroughly. The take-apart type makes this a very simple matter and we would again urge prevention rather than cure for the type that is put together with screws.

A casting reel should be kept well oiled, just a drop at a time. Too much oil will spoil the reel's action and have a tendency to gum very quickly. Just enough is right and will be determined by the amount of use the reel gets. High priced reels can well be sent in for factory cleaning and adjusting once a year—we are speaking now of the de luxe reels. The average angler will usually put them out of their fine condition through the use of a too large or too small screw-driver, as well as maladjustments of the mechanism. Such reels are as fine in their fittings as a high grade watch and need ex-

pert care. Medium priced reels may be "tinkered with," taken apart, cleaned and oiled as desired, and the angler *may* become expert enough to care for his better winches as well.

Prevent the reel from getting dirty and keep it properly oiled.

Lines

Bait-casting lines need little care aside from thorough drying after use. Silk is animal fibre and will decompose very quickly if permitted to remain damp for any length of time. Dry the lines in the shade by stretching them between trees. When the line is to be put away for any length of time see that it is spooled loosely so that it will not "set" in coils.

After each half day of casting break off about fourteen inches of line and make a new casting loop. The end of the line gets a great deal of wear and is the first to give up. It is also well to reverse the line after it has been used for some time, as this gives the caster practically a new line at the end where the greatest strain will be found in fighting a fish—the last few yards before the net.

Lures

Keep the lures clean, hooks sharp, and the metal parts of all lures wiped off with an oiled cloth. Flies and bucktail must be kept in moth-proof containers. Take pride in your tackle box and its equipment—it will pay when the test comes and the big one of your dreams will not be among those missing.

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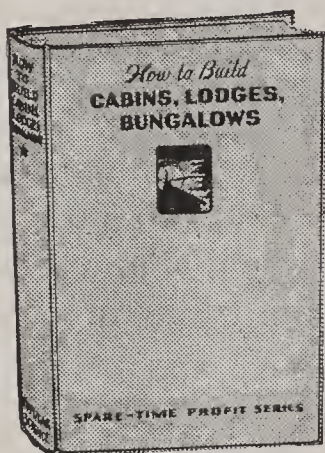
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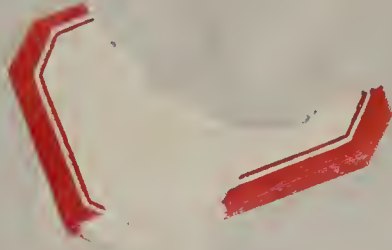
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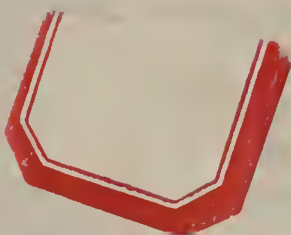
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